Veterinary Nurses Council

Agenda for meeting to be held on Tuesday 5 May 2015 at 10.30am

1. Apologies for absence
2. Declarations of interest
3. Minutes of meeting held on 3 February 2015 (Paper attached)
4. Matters arising
5. Update on operational matters (Oral report)

Matters for decision by VN Council and reports from Sub-Committees

6. Delegation scheme (terms of reference) (Paper attached)
7. Guidance on the use of titles: specialists, advanced practitioners and veterinary nurses (Paper attached)
8. VN Education Sub-Committee
   Minutes of meeting held on 23 March 2015 (Paper attached)
9. CPD Audit (Paper attached)
10. English Language testing (Paper attached)
11. Awarding Body Board
    Minutes of meeting held on 24 March 2015 (Paper attached)

Matters of note

12. International Qualifications
    Report on overseas entrants (Paper attached)
13. Reports from Committees
    a. Practice Standards Group (Oral report)
b. Standards Committee  
Oral report  
c. VN Preliminary Investigation Committee  
Paper attached  
d. VN Disciplinary Committee  
Oral report  

14. Unpaid work placements  
Paper attached  

15. Communications report  
Oral report  

16. VN Council membership and appointments  
Oral report  
a. VN Council election result  
Oral report  
b. Appointment of Committee/Sub-Committee members  
Oral report  
c. Election of Vice-Chairman for 2015/2016  
Oral report  

17. Golden Jubilee Award  
Oral report  

18. Any other business  

19. Date of next meeting  
Tuesday 7 October 2014 at 10.30am  

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April 2015  
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<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
<td>Minutes of meeting of VN Council held on 3 February 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classification</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>Minutes of the meeting of Veterinary Nurses Council held on 5 February 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Decisions required</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
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<td><strong>Attachments</strong></td>
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Veterinary Nurses Council

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2015

Members:

- Mrs Katherine Kissick - Chairman
- Mrs Elizabeth Armitage-Chan*
- Mrs Victoria Aspinall
- Miss Elizabeth Branscombe
- Miss Alison Carr
- Mr Niall Connell - Vice-Chairman
- Mrs Elizabeth Cox - Vice-Chairman
- Mr Dominic Dyer
- Mrs Elizabeth Figg
- Mrs Andrea Jeffery
- Miss Hilary Orpet
- Professor Susan Proctor
- Miss Amber Richards
- Mrs Amy Robinson
- Colonel Neil Smith
- Mrs Penelope Swindlehurst

*absent

In attendance:

- Mrs Annette Amato - Committee Secretary
- Mrs Freda Andrews - Director of Education
- Mrs Julie Dugmore - Head of Veterinary Nursing
- Mrs Victoria Hedges - Examinations Manager
- Mr Gordon Hockey - Registrar
- Ms Lizzie Lockett - Director of Communications
- Ms Laura McClintock - Advisory Solicitor

Apologies for absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Elizabeth Armitage-Chan.

Declarations of interest

2. There were no new declarations of interest.

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2014

3. The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2014 were accepted as a correct record.
Matters arising

4. **Implementation of the new Royal Charter.** The Registrar was delighted to report that the new Charter would be signed and sealed on 17 February 2015, and the new regulatory rules as approved by VN Council would come into effect from this date. All veterinary nurses would be notified of the change, and listed nurses would automatically be transferred to the Register. This would mean that in future, any nurse whose name is removed from the Register for disciplinary reasons would then be unable to practise as a veterinary nurse. It was confirmed that the letter to listed nurses would explain that they would be required to sign the professional declaration and confirm their CPD compliance at the time of their annual fee renewal in the autumn.

5. **CPD Audit.** It was noted that the report on the annual audit of CPD for RVNs for 2014 would be provided to the Education Sub-Committee at its meeting in March, and then to VN Council at its next meeting in May.

6. **RVNs as signatories.** One member reported that a RVN colleague had recently been accepted as an approved signatory for a passport application photograph, this having been raised as a potential problem at the previous meeting. The Registrar added that as members of a professional body, it would be expected that RVNs should be accepted as signatories without issues in the future.

Update on operational matters

7. The Registrar reported that RCVS Council would be considering the options for governance reform at its meeting in March. Any actions arising would take place later in the year. It was also reported that a significant financial RCVS contribution had been directed to funding mental health matters, including the veterinary health support programme. This should have the effect of decreasing the number of cases being considered under the complaints and disciplinary systems, with an added benefit of being more cost effective and efficient. The Chairman stressed the need to drive forward awareness of the Mind Matters Initiative and the Veterinary Health Protocol.

8. The Head of Veterinary Nursing introduced the new Qualifications Officer, Mrs Lily Lipman, who was now dealing with the supervision and auditing of licence to practise VN qualifications.

Postnominals

9. The Head of Veterinary Nursing presented a paper setting out the options for the display of postnominal qualifications of veterinary nurses in the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses. This had been originally considered at the meeting of VN Council in October, when it had been agreed to await the outcome of the discussions by RCVS Council on the use of postnominals for veterinary surgeons before a final decision was made. RCVS Council, at its meeting in November 2014, had accepted a list of qualifications which had been
recommended by the Education Committee for display in the Register, and had approved criteria and a mechanism for review for adding future qualifications to this list.

10. Several members spoke in favour of retaining the current position for the Nurses' Register, with the only postnominals displayed being RVN and DipAVN, and there was general agreement that it would be preferable to retain this simple format. There was also some support for the suggestion, made by a holder of the DipAVN, that even this qualification should not be displayed, in favour of absolute simplicity. It was agreed, however that Council may wish to consider including other qualifications of this type and level in the future and advice of the Registrar was that it was preferable not to make any adjustments at this stage. It was reiterated that the discussion related only to the display of postnominals in the register and on the website. Nurses would, of course, be able to show whatever qualifications they felt appropriate on their stationery and business cards.

11. At the conclusion of the discussion Council unanimously approved a proposal by Colonel Smith that the status quo in relation to the display of postnominals in the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses should be maintained, and that a focus group should be established within the Education Sub-Committee, possibly within the DipAVN working party, to review advanced qualifications and make recommendations as to whether these might be considered for inclusion in the future.

12. It was also agreed that it should be made clear to the profession that other relevant postnominals could be used in stationery and on business cards, and that the RCVS was not taking anything away or failing to recognise achievements.

**International Qualifications**

13. The Examinations Manager presented a paper setting out proposals for changes to the registration process for veterinary nurses trained outside the UK. The proposals were the outcome of discussions at the two meetings of the International Qualifications Working Party which had been established by VN Council in 2014 to review the current process. The minutes of the meetings of the working party were provided, together with papers detailing a the proposals of the working party in relation to different categories of nurses trained outside the UK and the suggested criteria for accreditation, quality monitoring and pre-registration examinations. It was noted that some decisions needed to be made by Council at today's meeting, following which the criteria and examinations would be considered at the next meeting of the Education Sub-Committee. The papers and annexes are available on request.

14. **Accreditation of non-UK Awarding Organisations (AOs) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and their qualifications.** Council approved in full the proposals of the working party that there should be an opportunity for AOs and HEIs located outside the UK to be accredited by the RCVS. These institutions would be subject to the same accreditation criteria as UK institutions, including visits and annual quality monitoring. The fees would be the same as for UK institutions but the travel and accommodation expenses of visitors would be paid by the institution. It was confirmed that the accreditation process is self-funding.
15. **Changes to the procedure for registration of nurses trained outside the UK (at non-accredited AOs/HEIs).** The detailed proposals for changes to the registration process for nurses trained outside the UK were noted. Applications from nurses trained within the EU/EAA must be considered in line with the EU directive and the requirements differ slightly to those from non-EU/EAA countries. The Director of Education clarified, in response to a query, that the accreditation of veterinary nurse qualifications falls under a different section of the EU directive to that for veterinary surgeons. Applications are considered by the RCVS equivalency officer on an individual basis and if the qualification does not completely meet the RCVS criteria, a period of adaptation or a test can be required. Qualifications that do not meet the RCVS criteria are rejected. For non-EU/EEA trained nurses the pre-registration examination will remain a compulsory part of the process.

16. It was additionally confirmed that where an overseas trained veterinary nurse wishes to work in a UK veterinary practice for a period of adaptation or preparing for pre-registration examination, this will be considered under appropriate supervision and for a limited time.

17. Council approved the proposed procedure for registration of nurses trained outside the UK (at non-accredited AOs/HEIs).

18. **English Language testing of veterinary nurses trained outside the UK.** It was noted that the RCVS cannot ask an EU/EEA trained veterinary nurse to provide evidence of their ability to communicate in English before they register with the RCVS. Whilst the RCVS is prohibited from testing English language an employer has the right to ensure English Language competence of their employees. The Working Party had suggested that the RCVS should do more to inform employers of this fact.

19. It was noted that the proposed pre-examinations for applicants from outside the EU/EEA would be conducted in English. These examinations would test reading, listening, writing and speaking skills in the context of veterinary nursing. The need for compulsory English Language testing was therefore seen to be superfluous. The working party proposed that all applicants should be advised that they should have a level of English Language competence at a minimum of IELTS 7 or Europass Language Passport level C1. Applicants who have voluntarily achieved ILETS or the Europass Language Passport will be asked to declare this on their application. A comparison of the examination performance would be carried out of nurses who have achieved ILETS at level 7 and those who have not. If after 3 years there is a considerable difference then the requirement will be reviewed.

20. Some members expressed concern that it was not possible to carry out an English Language test for all applicants from EU/EEA countries but it was confirmed that this was not permitted at present. It was suggested that there could be other ways to deal with problems that arise due to poor communication skills. Council accepted the proposals as set out in the paper, but suggested that additionally the discussions taking place with DEFRA relating to this issue for veterinary surgeons should also be widened to include veterinary nurses.

21. The Chairman thanked the Examinations Manager and the members of the Working Party for their hard work in developing these proposals.
VN Education Sub-Committee

22. Minutes of meeting held on 17 November 2014. Mrs Jeffery presented the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2014, and drew particular attention to three points.

23. Changes to accreditation criteria. A full review of the accreditation criteria, standards and procedures had been carried out, to tie in with the new rules and standards which would come into effect with the introduction of the new Charter. The criteria and guidance notes were now set out in three separate handbooks, which had been approved by the Sub-Committee:

- RCVS standards and procedures for the accreditation of veterinary nursing qualifications
- RCVS centre handbook incorporating standards and procedures for approval and quality monitoring
- RCVS training practice handbook incorporating standards and procedures for approval and quality monitoring

The handbooks would be issued on the website as soon as the Charter had been signed and sealed. Mrs Jeffery reiterated her thanks to the Head of Veterinary Nursing and the Examinations Manager for their hard work in producing these very helpful and comprehensive documents.

24. Training Practice Numbers. The Sub-Committee would be provided at each meeting with information on current TP numbers. A summary of TP numbers was tabled for the information of Council, from which it was noted that there are currently 2178 TPs, with 209 new approvals in the period January 2014 to January 2015.

25. Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing Working Party. It was anticipated that the DipAVN Working Party would commence work towards the end of 2015.

Golden Jubilee Award

26. The Chairman reported that the request for nominations for the Golden Jubilee award for 2015 would be publicised on the website in the next few days. Members of Council were asked to encourage nominations and raise awareness of this prestigious award for VNs, veterinary surgeons and lay people who have made an outstanding contribution to veterinary nursing. The website link would be circulated to all members of Council as soon as it was available, and the closing date for nominations was 24 April. Applications would be reviewed by a panel comprising the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and a lay member and the details of the recommended recipient would be circulated to all Council members.

Reports from Committees
27. **Practice Standards Group.** Council noted a paper prepared by the Senior PSS Manager which provided an update on the status of the project to update the Practice Standards Scheme. Since the last report, there had been a series of meetings to finalise the new modules and Awards. The work on the IT system had been completed in early January and had been successfully integrated with the main RCVS database under test conditions. The recruitment of new assessors was due to begin in March/April 2015.

28. **Standards Committee.** Mrs Cox provided a report on the most recent Standards Committee meeting held on 28 January 2015, noting the key issues for veterinary nurses. The first was an update on the Committee’s review of the current Kennel Club reporting scheme relating to caesarean sections, or surgeries altering natural conformation. It was noted that the data supplied by the Kennel Club indicates that the numbers of reports from practices are low and the Committee agreed that that it would be helpful if the Kennel Club could demonstrate an evidence base to suggest that the scheme does in fact bring about animal welfare benefits. If this could be shown, the Committee agreed that the RCVS would continue to support the scheme, and potentially raise its profile by producing further guidance. The Committee also approved new guidance on the safe handling of cytotoxic drugs and the COSHH regulations, including advice on key areas such as safe handling, hazards and precautions, risk assessments as well as risks to clients from their pets undergoing therapies which use cytotoxic drugs.

29. **VN Preliminary Investigation Committee.** The Report from the Chairman of the RVN P1 Committee on the activity of the Committee since the last VN Council meeting was noted. There had been two new cases considered since the last meeting of VN Council. One case was closed with advice to the RVN and one case is being considered under the RCVS Health Protocol. The report included a table showing the concerns received against RVNs since April 2011, from which it was noted that the categories of Communication/Consent and Negligence/Inadequate Care are the commonest areas of concern.

30. **VN Disciplinary Committee.** It was reported that there had been no cases heard, and no cases referred to the VN Disciplinary Committee since the last meeting of Council.

31. **Fitness to Practise.** Ms McClintock reported that the Fitness to Practise group had been working with the veterinary schools to produce a guidance booklet which the veterinary schools had agreed to adopt. The next phase of work for the group would be the drafting of a document following similar concepts but tailored to veterinary nurses. This would cover both vocational and higher education institutions, and these organisations would need to be approached for guidance. It was suggested that this could be raised at the next meeting of AOs and HEIs.

**VN Register/List report**

32. Council noted a paper setting out the number of registered and listed veterinary nurses as at 22 January 2015, the number of nurses removed in January 2015 for non-payment of the annual fee, and the number of new registrations and transfers to the register in 2014. The number of veterinary nurses is growing steadily year on year and there are now over 12,000
on the register and list (shortly to be combined). It was noted that fewer nurses had been removed for non-payment of the annual fee than in previous years.

VN Council election nominations and appointments

33. It was reported that three nominations had been received for the two available places for elected veterinary nurses. The election papers and candidates’ manifestos would be sent out in March, and the voting deadline was 5pm, Friday 24 April 2015.

Communications report

34. The Director of Communications provided an update on recent and forthcoming events and activities. A “Meet the RCVS Day” had been held the previous day for members of BVNA Council and some regional co-ordinators. This had proved very successful and a request had been made that it should be repeated annually. The next “Meet the RCVS Day” would take place at the RCVS on 24 March, and the next Regional Question Time meeting was due to be held in Guildford on 19 March. The RCVS would have a stand at the BSAVA congress in Birmingham on 9 – 12 April, and at the London Pet show on 9 – 10 May, where a key theme would be the promotion of the role of the RVN. Any members of VN Council attending these events who might be able to spare some time to assist on the stand would be very welcome.

35. The joint RCVS/BVA Vet Futures project had been launched at the London Vet Show in November, and a series of joint regional meetings were being arranged. The dates and locations would be notified when available. It was intended that the outcome would be the production of a report for discussion in September. The Communications department was in the process of producing a short video outlining the role of the College which would be first shown at a reception at the House of Commons, being held to celebrate the new Charter, in March.

36. Other significant activities included the setting up of a project called the Mind Matters Initiative, for which the RCVS had provided funding on a five-year basis. This would aim to address mental health and wellbeing issues within the veterinary team. It was also reported that as part of this initiative, since the end of 2014 the VetHelpline has been able to provide a “manned” 24-hour service rather than the use of an answering machine. VetHelpline also has a new telephone number 0303 040 2551 which will be promoted at events around the country. The Chairman added that this was a very positive and encouraging initiative.

Any other business

37. Dominic Dyer said that he had been working with the Labour party on developing an animal welfare manifesto and had been promoting the work of the veterinary nurse.

38. Admissions and graduation ceremonies. The Chairman reported that the number of newly qualified veterinary nurses attending admissions ceremonies at the RCVS was increasing and three full ceremonies had been held in January, with a total of over a hundred nurses attending. These events are always very successful, with many appreciative comments from
the nurses and their families. Attendance by a representative of VN Council at most of the university graduation ceremonies to lead the nurses through their professional declaration is now well established, and this provides an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of the profession. The list of dates and events in 2015 would shortly be circulated to all members of Council to indicate their availability. Members of Council would also be most welcome to attend an admissions ceremony at the RCVS.

39. **Online registration.** In response to a query as to whether in future newly qualified veterinary nurses might be able to apply to register online, the Head of Veterinary Nursing confirmed that this was under consideration, although the timescale was not certain.

40. **Joint Officers’ meetings with BVNA.** The Chairman reported that she had arranged to hold the next joint officers’ meeting with the BVNA on the afternoon of 5 May 2015, following the VN Council meeting.

41. **Audio recording of Council meetings.** The Head of Veterinary Nursing said that it may be decided in future to record Council meetings for internal administrative purposes. If this was the case, Council would, of course, be informed in advance that the proceedings were being recorded.

**Date of next meeting**

42. Tuesday 5 May 2015 at 10.30am.
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<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>5 May 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
<td>Delegation scheme</td>
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<td><strong>Classification</strong></td>
<td>Unclassified</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>The Council is invited to consider proposing amendments to its remit as set out in the delegation scheme approved by the RCVS Council</td>
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<td><strong>Decisions required</strong></td>
<td>Whether to recommend revised terms of reference</td>
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<td><strong>Attachments</strong></td>
<td>Annex A: current terms of reference</td>
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<td>Annex B: suggested revised version</td>
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Background

1. In June 2014 the RCVS Council approved a revised delegation scheme setting out the terms of reference of committees. The VN Council's remit, set out at annex A, was unchanged.

Suggested changes

2. A number of changes need to be made in consequence of the granting of the new RCVS Charter
The Charter requires the College to continue to keep the list, which is now to be known as the register, so it still makes sense for the delegation scheme to pass that function on to the VN Council. The scheme does not, however, need to say anything about the functions given to the VN Council by the Charter, namely to set standards for the training and education of registrants, requirements in relation to registration, and standards for conduct and discipline.

3. There are two references in the present scheme to awarding body functions. These can now be dropped in view of the winding up of the Awarding Body.

4. The current wording could be improved in some other respects, namely:

   - in specifying the composition of the VN Council the scheme mentions first the RCVS Council and veterinary appointees, then the elected veterinary nurses, then the lay members. That order of presentation seems inappropriate;

   - there is no need for the scheme to specify that the RCVS Council nominees are to be appointed by the RCVS Council. Selecting them in fact now falls within the remit of the Operational Board;

   - it talks about the VN Council appointing some of its own members: the normal expression for this would be co-opt;

   - it gives power to co-opt a LANTRA representative, but this has not in fact been done for some years and it in any case seems wrong for such a representative to become a voting member of the Council;

   - the stipulation that either the Chair or at least one Vice-Chair of the VN Council must be a veterinary nurse makes little sense. They are elected by secret ballot, and it is up to the electors to decide who to vote for;

   - the present paragraph 49, which talks about the normal term of office of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs, is reasonable as a policy statement but not appropriate to the delegation scheme, which has to set clear rules.

5. A suggested revision of the terms of reference is at annex B.
Extract from delegation scheme approved by RCVS Council in June 2014

44. The Veterinary Nurses’ Council shall consist of the following members:
   - two members of the Council, to be appointed by the Council, and a maximum of two veterinary surgeons (whether or not members of the Council), to be appointed by the Veterinary Nurses’ Council;
   - eight veterinary nurses practising or living wholly or mainly in the United Kingdom, elected by ballot of all veterinary nurses, conducted substantially in accordance with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Council Election Scheme 1967 (as amended), with the necessary adaptations; and
   - four lay members, to be appointed by the Veterinary Nurses’ Council.

45. The chairman of the Professions Allied to Veterinary Science Industry Group of the Sector Skills Council (LANTRA), or its successor committee, or that person's nominee, may be co-opted as an additional member of the Veterinary Nurses’ Council.

46. The term of office of elected and appointed members of the Veterinary Nurses’ Council shall be four years in each case, and one-quarter of the elected members shall retire in rotation each year, being eligible for re-election if still qualified to serve. A member elected or appointed to fill a casual vacancy shall serve the unexpired portion of the predecessor’s term of office.

47. The quorum for meetings of the Veterinary Nurses’ Council shall be seven members, which must include four veterinary nurse members, two veterinary surgeon members (one of whom must be a member of the Council), and one lay member.

48. The chairman and two vice-chairmen of the Veterinary Nurses’ Council shall be elected by the Veterinary Nurses’ Council, by secret ballot, provided that where the person elected as chairman is a veterinary surgeon or lay member at least one vice-chairman shall be a veterinary nurse. The election of the chairman shall be confirmed by the RCVS Council.

49. The term of office of the chairman shall be either two or three years and vice-chairmen shall serve for either one or three years, with the outgoing chairman normally serving one year as vice-chairman.

50. The Veterinary Nurses’ Council may also elect a Finance Officer from amongst its number to oversee the financial affairs relating to the veterinary nursing activities of the College and to work alongside the College Treasurer.
51. The Veterinary Nurses’ Council shall:

- maintain the list of veterinary nurses referred to in Schedule 3 to the Act;

- establish and keep under review standards of proficiency for safe and effective veterinary nursing practice, including requirements for admission to the list of veterinary nurses and the training and examinations to be undertaken;

- ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant regulatory authorities relating to vocational qualifications in veterinary nursing;

- establish and keep under review standards of good character and conduct required for listed veterinary nurses and develop a voluntary system of regulation;

- establish and keep under review schemes for post-qualification training and continuing professional development for veterinary nurses, and the outcomes to be achieved, with a view to recording an additional entry in the list mentioned in Schedule 3 to the Act;

- recommend to the Operational Board a budget and levels of fees to be charged for awarding body functions, qualification, listing and post qualification diplomas;

- recommend to the Council amendments to the Veterinary Nursing Bye-Laws and Advanced Veterinary Nursing Bye-Laws; and

- oversee the work of the Awarding Body Management Board.

52. In exercising its functions, the Veterinary Nurses’ Council shall ensure that the welfare of animals and good veterinary practice are central to its work.
Suggested revised terms of reference

44. The Veterinary Nurses’ Council shall consist of the following members:

- eight veterinary nurses practising or living wholly or mainly in the United Kingdom, elected by ballot of all veterinary nurses, conducted substantially in accordance with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Council Election Scheme 1967 (as amended), with the necessary adaptations;

- four lay members and a maximum of two veterinary surgeons (whether or not members of the Council), to be co-opted by the Veterinary Nurses’ Council; and

- two members of the Council.

45. The term of office of elected and appointed members of the Veterinary Nurses’ Council shall be four years in each case, and one-quarter of the elected members shall retire in rotation each year, being eligible for re-election if still qualified to serve. A member elected or appointed to fill a casual vacancy shall serve the unexpired portion of the predecessor’s term of office.

46. The quorum for meetings of the Veterinary Nurses’ Council shall be seven members, which must include four veterinary nurse members, two veterinary surgeon members (one of whom must be a member of the Council), and one lay member.

47. The Chair and two Vice-Chairs of the Veterinary Nurses’ Council shall be elected by the Veterinary Nurses’ Council, by secret ballot. The election of the Chair shall be confirmed by the RCVS Council.

48. The Veterinary Nurses’ Council may also elect a Finance Officer from amongst its number to oversee the financial affairs relating to the veterinary nursing activities of the College and to work alongside the College Treasurer.

49. The Veterinary Nurses’ Council shall, in addition to those functions specified in the Supplemental Royal Charter,

- maintain the register of veterinary nurses;

- ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant regulatory authorities relating to vocational qualifications in veterinary nursing;
- establish and keep under review schemes for post-qualification training and continuing professional development for veterinary nurses, and the outcomes to be achieved, with a view to recording an additional entry in the register of veterinary nurses;

- recommend to the Operational Board a budget and levels of fees to be charged; and

- recommend to the Council amendments to the rules relating to the registration, conduct and discipline of veterinary nurses.

50. In exercising its functions, the Veterinary Nurses’ Council shall ensure that the welfare of animals and good veterinary practice are central to its work.
Meeting | Standards Committee, Education Committee and VN Council
---|---
Date | 29 April 2015, 5 and 6 May 2015
Title | Guidance on the use of titles: specialists, advanced practitioners and veterinary nurses
Classification | Unclassified
Summary | This paper explores how the enforcement of titles is carried out through the RCVS Codes of Professional Conduct and how this could be strengthened. RCVS Council approves any changes to the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons; VN Council approves changes to the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses.
Decisions required | (1) Standards Committee to approve changes to the Codes of Professional Conduct (3.5) relating to use of titles and Supporting Guidance Chapter 23, and to recommend these to RCVS Council and VN Council.
| (2) VN Council to approve a change to the VN Code of Professional Conduct relating to veterinary nurse titles (3.5)
| (3) Education Committee to endorse changes to the Codes of Professional Conduct (3.5) and Supporting Guidance relating to specialists and advance practitioner titles
Attachments | Annex A: Legal opinion [This is available to Council and Committee members but otherwise remains confidential]
| Annex B: Draft revisions to the Codes of Professional Conduct (3.5) and Supporting Guidance Chapter 23
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Guidance on the use of titles: specialists, advanced practitioners and veterinary nurses

Background: Protected titles

1. Protected titles exist across the spectrum of UK healthcare professions. Such titles are enshrined in legislation, which generally restricts their use by unqualified or unregistered persons. Often, the legislation will go further than restriction of title alone and will prohibit the carrying out of certain activities that form part of a professional’s usual scope of practice. This means that anyone who carries out a restricted activity or uses a protected title without proper qualification and registration is guilty of an offence.

2. The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 is a prime example of such legislation. Section 19 of the Act restricts the practice of veterinary surgery by unqualified persons unless there is a suitable exemption and Section 20 prohibits the use of practitioners’ titles by unqualified persons and makes it an offence for any person not registered in the RCVS Register to take or use the title of veterinary surgeon or any name, title, addition or description implying registration. There are similar examples in the Medical Act 1983, the Dentists Act 1984 and the Chiropractors Act 1994.

3. The use of a protected title allows a professional to indicate to the public that he or she has undertaken the requisite training and qualifications to enter a regulated profession. The titles are used to demonstrate a level of competence and fitness to practise in the particular field and assure confidence in the relevant profession. Title misuse is viewed seriously across the healthcare professions, not least because of the risks to patients’ safety and public protection (and in the veterinary field animal welfare) when unregistered persons hold themselves or others as registered professionals.

Part 1: Specialists and Advanced Practitioners

4. The titles ‘specialist’ and ‘advanced practitioner’ are not legally protected, but proper use of these titles is currently enforced via the Code of Professional Conduct.

5. At its last meeting on 28 January, the Standards Committee agreed, in principle, to a further amendment to the Code to clarify that only those listed as specialists with the RCVS should promote themselves to the public as such. The Code and Supporting Guidance already reflected the principle recommendations of the Specialisation Working Party, but it was felt that further clarification in the main body of the Code would be helpful.

6. These further changes were however put on hold pending external legal advice on the College’s general position with regard to specialists, in particular the maintenance of a non statutory specialist list/register and enforcement of this through the Code.

7. The legal opinion has now been received and is attached at Annex A. In short, this confirms that the College’s maintenance of the Lists can be enforced through the Codes, particularly in light of the provisions of the new Charter. The opinion supports the maintenance of such Lists as an expedient way of upholding standards and advancing the practice of veterinary surgery, in the interests of animal welfare and the wider public interest.
8. The legal opinion also confirms that the use of the title ‘specialist’ or ‘advanced practitioner’ without entry on the relevant list/register is capable of constituting disgraceful conduct in a professional respect. Each case should however be considered on its own merits; and the context would be important. A simple and genuine misunderstanding would differ from deliberate, wilful and continued misuse, particularly where the College has advised the individual to desist.

Part 2: Veterinary Nurses

9. In contrast to the situation with veterinary surgeons, the title ‘veterinary nurse’ is not currently protected by legislation meaning that anyone, no matter how little training and education they may have, can legally refer to themselves as a veterinary nurse.

10. The new Charter (which came into effect on 17 February 2015) does not provide statutory protection of the title, but it will do much to help the RCVS to enforce the proper use of titles and strengthen the way we regulate veterinary nurses. The Charter will also lend weight to the arguments in favour of statutory protection of title. Indeed, it is a priority of VN Council and the College as a whole to work towards the statutory protection of title and to continue to lobby for this change.

11. While statutory protection is an aspiration for the RCVS, it is impossible to say with certainty when this will happen. There are, however, interim steps that could be taken by the RCVS to further reinforce the proper use of the VN title and to minimise any confusion for the public.

RCVS views on the proper use of VN titles

12. It is first important to look at what the College considers as proper use of VN titles. The Charter refers to veterinary nurses, who like veterinary surgeons are registered with the RCVS:

   Associates of the College – Registration
   9. A person whose name is entered in the register of veterinary nurses shall be entitled to be styled a registered veterinary nurse and to use the post-nominal letters RVN.

   Associates of the College
   12. The College shall continue to keep a list of veterinary nurses, and the list is to be known as the register of veterinary nurses. A veterinary nurse who is registered in the register of veterinary nurses shall be an associate of the College.

13. The wording of the Charter supports the view that individuals should not use the VN title when not registered because to do so is misleading to the public. First, the title ‘veterinary nurse’ is a title used by those on the RCVS register, who are subject to standards of conduct and subject to regulation. Second, it is not a qualification, but the professional status and title upon registration with the RCVS as a veterinary nurse.

What more could be done?

14. One way to enforce proper use of veterinary nurse titles is to include reference to this in the Codes of Professional Conduct. Arguably, the more the RCVS and the profession refer to RVNs as VNs,
the more this will become established and could then be protected under normal trading acts legislation.

15. Some may ask whether this is a step too far, particularly since the title is not legally protected. As a regulator, the RCVS is under a duty to protect the public and assure confidence in the profession. Encouraging proper use via the Codes seems to be an appropriate measure in the absence of specific legislation and given the fundamental aims of the new Charter.

16. Additionally, in 2009 the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (CHRE) – an independent body accountable to Parliament and responsible for overseeing the healthcare regulators in the UK – carried out a review of how regulators address title misuse. Although we are not scrutinised by CHRE, the College contributed to the evidence gathering process. Of relevance to these discussions was a recommendation that all regulators should take proactive measures relating to protection of title and that it is crucial that titles “retain meaning and integrity in the eyes of the public”. Indeed, that is the fundamental aim of the new guidance, which seeks to reinforce proper use of titles and to assure public confidence in the profession.

Parallels with other healthcare regulators

17. There has been some discussion on use of the general title ‘nurse’ within other healthcare regulators. Article 44 of the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001 makes the illegal use of the protected titles ‘registered nurse’ and ‘midwife’ an offence. However, the title ‘nurse’ on its own is not legally protected under this legislation.

18. The 2010 CHRE Report summarised the NMC’s views on title “that other professions using ‘nurse’ as part of their title is confusing for patients and the public. They [NMC] have expressed a particular concern in relation to the title ‘registered dental nurse.’ The NMC has stated that the levels of education and scope of practice for a registered dental nurse is different from that of a registered nurse. The NMC believes that the public understanding of the role of a nurse is undermined by the use of similar title in a different role”.

19. On 2 March 2010, the NMC also responded to recommendations of the Prime Minister’s Independent Commission on the Future of Nursing and Midwifery in England, which included a recommendation that the NMC should protect the title ‘nurse’ to ensure public protection and clarify current confusion about the titles, roles and responsibilities by limiting use of the title ‘nurse’ solely to nurses registered with the NMC. At that time, the NMC Chief Executive and Registrar, Professor Weir-Hughes said “the Commission has given the NMC a clear mandate to regulate advanced nursing practice and protect the title ‘nurse’. Both of these are issues which cause concern to the public because there is a lack of clarity and some confusion as to what the various job titles and the associated competencies imply”. To date, research indicates that the title remains unprotected.

20. Notwithstanding the NMC concerns, there is a strong argument that the use of such titles would not mislead or confuse the public if preceded with clear descriptors such as ‘veterinary’. A timeline on veterinary nursing produced by RCVS Knowledge confirms that the title ‘veterinary nurse’ was in fact protected until 1984 after which time the title ‘veterinary nurse’ was first used. It is difficult to envisage further issues here.

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1 Protecting the public from unregistered practitioners: Tackling misuse of protected title, February 2010

2 www.nmc-uk.org/
Who will be affected by changes to the RCVS Code of Conduct?

21. Based on a number of recent enquiries to the RCVS, particularly in light of the publicity around the new Charter, it is clear that some individuals are still using the title ‘veterinary nurse’ when not registered with the RCVS. Some examples include:

a) **Unqualified, lay and auxiliary staff:** Job titles for practice staff should be clear and referring to unqualified staff as ‘veterinary nurses’ could cause confusion for the public and for veterinary surgeons wishing to delegate procedures under Schedule 3. In a busy practice, a new or locum veterinary surgeon may not know the status of every member of staff and consequently it is vital that designations are clear. The remedy here is that a number of alternative titles are available for this category of staff and such titles are often used by practices across the UK. Appropriate titles for this category of staff may include animal care assistants, animal nursing assistants or veterinary care assistants. The College has also asked higher and further education institutions to ensure that they do not use the title ‘veterinary nursing’ for any of their courses or course modules if they do not lead to a formal veterinary nursing qualification.

b) **Unregistered, but with recognised qualifications:** There may be some who have obtained a veterinary nursing qualification such as the old RCVS Certificate in Veterinary Nursing, but have not registered with the RCVS. For example, where they have been working in industry and not practising, but have continued to use the title. Such individuals should refrain from using the title veterinary nurse, but would be permitted to describe their qualification. These individuals may also be able to rejoin the register subject to a period of supervised practice if they have been off the Register for more than five years. If a student has not joined the register, without reason, 3 months after they qualify then they also fall under this category.

c) **Unrecognised qualifications:** Some individuals may have gained qualifications which are not recognised by the RCVS. In such cases, these individuals should not use the title veterinary nurse as this could cause confusion for the public and for veterinary surgeons wishing to delegate procedures under Schedule 3.

22. In short, it would seem that strengthening the Code to enforce the proper use of titles would be unlikely to have a disproportionate or adverse impact on other categories of staff. Most will have an alternative title that could be used. Others may be able to rejoin the Register subject to certain conditions. The benefits in terms of clarity for the public and for the profession would seem to outweigh any arguments in favour of an unqualified person’s wish to use the title.

Part 3: Next steps

23. Attached at Annex B are draft changes to the Code and Supporting Guidance to further strengthen the position on title misuse:

   a) Standards Committee is asked to approve changes to the Codes of Professional Conduct (3.5) relating to use of titles and Supporting Guidance Chapter 23, and to recommend these to RCVS Council and VN Council.
b) VN Council to approve a change to the VN Code of Professional Conduct relating to veterinary nurse titles (3.5)

c) Education Committee is asked to endorse changes to the Codes of Professional Conduct (3.5) and Supporting Guidance relating to specialists and advance practitioner titles
New text in red, deleted text in strikethrough

**Code of Professional Conduct**

3.5 Veterinary surgeons must not hold out themselves, or others, as having expertise they cannot substantiate, or call themselves or others a ‘specialist’ or similar expression that implies specialist standing unless they have been accredited as specialists, where to do so would be misleading or misrepresentative.

3.5 Veterinary surgeons must not hold out themselves or others as specialists or advanced practitioners unless appropriately listed with the RCVS, or as veterinary nurses unless appropriately registered with the RCVS.

**VN Code of Professional Conduct**

3.5 Veterinary nurses must not hold out themselves or others as having expertise they cannot substantiate, or call themselves or others a ‘specialist’ or similar, where to do so would be misleading or misrepresentative.

3.5 Veterinary nurses must not hold out themselves or others as having expertise they cannot substantiate, or hold out others as specialists or advanced practitioners unless appropriately listed with the RCVS, or veterinary nurses unless appropriately registered with the RCVS.

**Supporting Guidance Chapter 23**

**Guidance on the use of titles**

**Specialists**

23.5 The RCVS specialist List is a list of veterinary surgeons, who meet certain entry criteria and are entitled to use a specialist title. The purpose of the specialist List is to provide a clear indication to the profession and the public of those veterinary surgeons who have been accredited as specialists by the RCVS or by a recognised European speciality college and then listed as appropriate on the RCVS List. Continued inclusion on the Specialist List requires veterinary surgeons to undertake periodic revalidation. For more information about entry criteria and revalidation please see [http://www.rcvs.org.uk/education/specialist-status/](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/education/specialist-status/)

23.6 Veterinary surgeons do not have to join the specialist List to practise any particular specialty, but they must be registered with the RCVS and included on the RCVS specialist List if they want to practise and use the title ‘specialist’ in the UK. This would include veterinary surgeons seeking to use specialist titles in connection with their business, trade, employment, or profession.
23.7 Veterinary surgeons on the RCVS specialist List are entitled to call themselves ‘RCVS Specialist in <subject area and/or species>’ if they have been accredited by the RCVS.

23.8 Veterinary surgeons on the RCVS specialist List are entitled to call themselves ‘European Specialist in <subject area and/or species>’ if they have been accredited by a recognised European speciality college.

23.9 Veterinary surgeons who are not on the specialist List should not describe themselves as ‘specialising in <subject area and/or species>’, but may use alternative terms such as ‘special interest in..’, ‘experienced in..’ or ‘practice limited to..’ when promoting their services.

Advanced Practitioners
23.10 The Advanced Practitioner List is a list of veterinary surgeons, who meet certain entry criteria and are entitled to use this title. The purpose the Advanced Practitioner List is to provide a clear indication to the profession and the public of those veterinary surgeons who have been accredited at postgraduate certificate level by the RCVS, by virtue of having demonstrated knowledge and experience in a particular area of veterinary practice beyond their initial primary veterinary degree as well as undertaking additional CPD. Continued inclusion on the Advanced Practitioner List requires veterinary surgeons to undertake periodic revalidation. For more information about entry criteria and revalidation please see http://www.rcvs.org.uk/education/advanced-practitioner-status/

23.11 Veterinary surgeons on the Advanced Practitioner List are entitled to describe themselves as an “Advanced Practitioner in <subject area and/or species>”.

Supporting guidance on referrals
1.4 The referring veterinary surgeon has a responsibility to ensure that the client is made aware of the level of expertise of appropriate and reasonably available referral veterinary surgeons, for example, whether they are veterinary specialists or advanced practitioners. They must not describe a referral veterinary surgeon as a specialist, or as an advanced practitioner, unless they are on the respective List.
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| Author       | Annette Amato  
Deputy Head of Veterinary Nursing  
0207 202 0713  
a.amato@rcvs.org.uk |
Veterinary Nurse Education Sub-Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2015

Members:

* Mrs Elizabeth Armitage-Chan - VN Council veterinary surgeon
Mrs Victoria Aspinall - VN Council veterinary surgeon
Mrs Elizabeth Figg - VN Council veterinary nurse
Mrs Susan Howarth - HE programme provider
* Miss Lisa Jarvis - Employer (SSC) representative
Mrs Andrea Jeffery - VN Council veterinary nurse (Chairman)
Dr Elizabeth Mossop - Independent educationalist
Professor Susan Proctor - VN Council lay member
Mrs Penelope Swindlehurst - VN Council lay member
* Dr Jenny Watkins - FE programme provider

In attendance:
Mrs Annette Amato - Committee Secretary
Mrs Freda Andrews - Director of Education (part-time)
Mrs Julie Dugmore - Head of Veterinary Nursing
Mrs Victoria Hedges - Examinations Manager
Mrs Lily Lipman - Qualifications Officer
Mr Luke Bishop - Communications Officer

*absent

Apologies for absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Elizabeth Armitage-Chan, Miss Lisa Jarvis and Dr Jenny Watkins.

Operational update

2. The Head of Veterinary Nursing introduced Mrs Lily Lipman, who had commenced in the role of Qualifications Officer in December 2014 with responsibility for the supervision and auditing of licence to practise VN qualifications. Mrs Victoria Hedges had moved into the role of Examinations Manager with responsibility for overseeing examinations and assessments in both the veterinary nursing and education departments.

3. The Head of Veterinary Nursing also reported that it was hoped to recruit a new member of staff to support enrolments and registrations at the busiest times of the year.

Declarations of interest
4. There were no new declarations of interest.

Minutes of the meeting of the Education Sub-Committee held on 17 November 2014

5. The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2014 were accepted as a correct record.

Matters arising on the Minutes

6. **Qualification handbooks.** The Examinations Manager reported that the first handbook (for HEIs and AOs) was almost ready for publication. Once finalised, this would be followed by the Centre and TP handbooks in the same format, and it was hoped that all three handbooks would be available for introduction to AOs and HEIs at their meeting at the end of April. The Head of Veterinary Nursing drew attention to the fact that the annex containing the day one skills had been highlighted to show where a skill was classified as medical nursing or surgical nursing under schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act, and asked the Sub-Committee to check that they were in agreement, and to respond by the end of the Easter break.

7. It was noted that the handbooks would be available online with the forms included as writable word documents, and the Qualifications Officer would be responsible for keeping them current. A review would take place between 6 and 8 months after the launch, taking into account general feedback. It was intended that a student handbook would also be produced but it was not the intention to duplicate the content of the university handbooks.

8. **Higher Education benchmarks.** It was confirmed that the HE benchmarks (Subject Benchmark Statement Veterinary Nursing) had now been produced, having been delayed due to staffing changes at QAA. Unfortunately the final version was issued by QAA before the new Charter came into effect, and therefore refer to the byelaws rather than the registration rules.

VN Licence to practise qualifications

New / provisionally approved AOs / HEIs

9. The Sub-Committee noted the update report on new and provisionally approved AOs and HEIs offering awards leading to a licence to practise qualification in veterinary nursing.

10. **University of South Wales.** It was noted that some documentation had been submitted by the university and that the validation event would take place in April. A report would be provided to the next meeting.

11. It was also reported that a proposed qualification at another university in Wales was still under discussion, and that a visit may take place to this university in June.

AO / HEI monitoring report

12. The Qualifications Officer presented the report on auditing activity undertaken for established
AOs and HEIs, together with several quality monitoring reports and risk assessments, and a number of specific points were highlighted. It was reported that the visit and audit regimes for the forthcoming year that been prepared and the plan would be forwarded to the Sub-Committee for information.

13. University of Brighton (Plumpton College). The University has confirmed that the FdSc in Veterinary Nursing programme will be reviewed in mid 2015. In the meantime, a few module changes have been submitted to the RCVS for approval. The Sub-Committee was provided with information on the proposed changes and it was confirmed that these comply with RCVS assessment criteria. The new modules would be included in the documentation submitted to the RCVS before the revalidation event.

14. Central Qualifications. A full report and risk assessment, together with the CQ response, was noted. There were no specific issues to highlight, and the Sub-Committee was pleased to note that the monitoring of assessments is of good quality.

15. City & Guilds. The Sub-Committee received the report of monitoring activity undertaken since the last meeting. It was noted that there had been a meeting with C&G in January to discuss a number of significant areas of concern, mainly relating to the examinations, but it was not clear whether these were being resolved. It was agreed that the Head of Veterinary Nursing should now make contact with the senior management in order to discuss these concerns further, to ensure that students were not being compromised.

16. Coventry University. The Sub-Committee noted a letter setting out the details of a meeting at which the monitoring report had been discussed, and confirming how the accreditation requirements and actions were being met. The Qualifications Officer reported that she had also conducted a number of telephone interviews with students regarding work placements, and there would be further ongoing monitoring of the situation.

17. Nottingham Trent University. It was noted that the University had submitted proposals for a major module change. The Sub-Committee was provided with full details of the proposal, including the assessment strategy and mapping document. There were some concerns expressed regarding the student experience, although it was noted from the documentation that the external examiner and the students were in support of the proposal. It was agreed that the proposals should be accepted and the university had met the RCVS requirements by notifying the changes before implementation. It was noted that the degree is due for revalidation in 2016 and the new module format could be monitored in the meantime.

18. There were no issues raised in respect of the other reports.

Approval of AO / HEI external examiners

19. The Sub-Committee noted the list of the current external examiners appointed by the AOs and HEIs, with details of their qualifications and experience. The Chairman suggested that AOs and HEIs should be reminded at the meeting in April that the RCVS maintains a list of those willing to act as external examiners for other institutions, and it was noted that those institutions
which do not provide examiners into the pool are more likely to have difficulty in attracting external examiners.

**Recognition of international qualifications**

20. The Examinations Manager presented a paper setting out proposals for changes to the registration process for veterinary nurses trained outside the UK. The proposals were the outcome of discussions at the two meetings of the International Qualifications Working Party (IQWP) which had been established by VN Council in 2014 to review the current process. The minutes of the meetings of the working party were provided, together with papers detailing the proposals of the working party in relation to different categories of nurses trained outside the UK and the suggested criteria for accreditation, quality monitoring and pre-registration examinations.

21. **Accreditation of non-UK Awarding Organisations (AOs) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and their qualifications.** It was reported that VN Council had approved the concept of permitting institutions located outside the UK to apply to for accreditation, subject to the same criteria as UK institutions, including visits and annual quality monitoring.

22. **Accreditation and quality monitoring of organisations and qualifications delivered partially outside the UK.** It was noted that some AOs/HEIs are offering qualifications outside the UK, in some cases delivered partially outside the UK. The Sub-Committee considered and agreed in full the proposals for criteria for accreditation and quality monitoring of these organisations and qualifications. Where a UK centre/college offers their qualifications to students working outside the UK, but attending college in the UK, this must be subject to approval and quality monitoring of the AO or HEI awarding the qualification. The training practice will need to meet the standards for RCVS TP approval and must receive the same level of quality monitoring as UK based TPs. The RCVS must be provided with details of all TPs approved outside the UK, but these will not be published online.

23. It was further agreed that quality monitoring activity should include visits to overseas training practices, and the number of visits would be based on risk assessment. All overseas visits would incur additional costs.

24. **Accreditation of UK qualification delivered wholly outside the UK.** An RCVS accredited AO/HEI can under its own legislation approve a centre/delivery site outside the UK. Where this occurs the centre will be required to meet the RCVS Centre Standards and quality monitoring should be undertaken by the AO/HEI. The Sub-Committee considered and agreed proposed wording for inclusion in the RCVS handbooks. Students enrolled on the qualification outside the UK would not need to be enrolled with the RCVS. The centres and TPs would be subject to RCVS centre and TP approval criteria, and to normal RCVS quality monitoring criteria. It was agreed that students coming to the UK for a short time only during their training would be granted temporary enrolment, with a sliding scale of fees. A section would be added to the handbooks to formalise the details for such students obtaining work experience or undertaking an Erasmus Year in the UK.
25. **Pre-registration examination for veterinary nurses trained outside the UK.** The Examinations Manager presented a paper setting out in full detail the proposals for future pre-registration theory and practical examinations which had been developed by the IQWP, and answered a number of questions raised on the detail. It was proposed that the remaining examinations in 2015 would follow the current format, with the new format being developed to take effect from 2016. The RCVS has recruited OSCE and theory item writers who would continue to undertake this function for the proposed new examinations. The theory examinations could be delivered online using the secure systems of Pearson Vue, which has test centres in over 170 countries, and this aspect of the examination could be taken in the candidate’s home country. The practical examinations would be delivered in the UK, three times a year.

26. It was proposed that the NPL would not be required for VNs trained outside the EU/EAA, as completion of the OSCE should demonstrate competency in a range of practical skills. Where a nurse trained in the EU/EAA is undertaking a period of adaptation, they will be required to complete some or all of the Day One Skills.

27. It was confirmed that an external examiner would need to be appointed. Proposals would be brought to the next meeting for a new Examinations Sub-Committee, reporting to the Education Sub-Committee, to oversee these examinations. The aim was that the examinations would be self funding. Detailed proposals for the format of the OSCE would also be brought to the next meeting.

28. The Chairman thanked the Examinations Manager and the IQWP for their hard work in producing the documentation, and confirmed that the Sub-Committee was in full agreement with all the proposals.

**Standards for training and education**

**Review of Day One Skills list for veterinary nurses**

29. The Head of Veterinary Nursing reported that at the recent VN Council Strategy planning day, strong views had been expressed that the Day One Skills List for veterinary nurses should be reviewed. The current skills list was developed to form the basis for an electronic logging system for the RCVS Level 3 Diploma in veterinary nursing, based on the National Occupational Standards, and the need now was to focus in particular on safe and effective clinical skills and Schedule 3 activities. The Sub-Committee considered a paper setting out the case for a complete review of the skills within the list as one of the regulatory benchmarks for VN practical training, together with a proposal for the establishment of a working party.

30. The Sub-Committee agreed that a Working Party should be established to carry out the review, and the proposed terms of reference and membership as set out in the paper were accepted. In addition to the review of the current competences and clinical requirement in course programmes, the remit would include the development of year one competences and skills, and the provision of appropriate guidance materials.
Nursing Progress Log (NPL) review and development

31. The Head of Veterinary Nursing presented a paper intended to inform the discussion on the review and development of the NPL, which VN Council had agreed in May 2014 should be retained and developed for the future. Council had hoped that the development of the NPL would progress along the lines of the Professional Development Record (PDR) for veterinary surgeons which comprises an initial student experience log (SEL), the professional development phase (PDP) for new graduates, and the online CPD recording tool. The current NPL is based on the modules of the VN Level 3 Diploma and inevitably contains some duplication, however when the skills list is reviewed, the mapping against modules will be removed, thus leading to a more streamlined tool.

32. The Director of Education gave a demonstration of the SEL used by the veterinary schools to show observed and assisted skills, and the PDP system.

33. It was generally agreed that the revised tool should include a further section for the recording of Year One Skills for RVNs, along the lines of the veterinary surgeon’s PDP, and that this should be a two-stage process, with accompanying guidance. It should also be borne in mind that a number of institutions currently use the NPL in assessment recording for their own qualifications and it would therefore be necessary to be mindful of the learning outcomes in the new tool.

34. It was agreed that the project for the development of the NPL should run more or less in parallel with the review of the Day One Skills, although it was pointed out that the development of an online tool would be a longer process. The Sub-Committee was asked to suggest suitable members for the focus group, and the Head of Veterinary Nursing would draw up terms of reference.

Apprenticeships

35. The Head of Veterinary Nursing reported on changes which are taking place in the apprenticeship system, following government guidance at the end of 2014. Apprenticeships in the future will be employer led, and at least 10 employers must be actively involved in the development, to include small employers. The RCVS and stakeholder groups are invited to support the process, however, involvement is limited specifically to support. It was noted that the RCVS would need to be involved as the criteria for registration need to be built into the framework. The system will need to be in place, supported by the RCVS, for 2017.

36. It was reported that Medivet had already started work on the development of the system. It was agreed that Jenny Watkins and Kathy Kissick would be asked to attend the meetings.

Training practice and student numbers

37. The Sub-Committee noted a paper showing the current numbers of approved training practices offering clinical training and work experience to student veterinary nurses. As requested at the previous meeting, the breakdown of TPs by region was provided, although it had not been possible to provide information on the number of students in each region. It was noted that
information is not provided by the centres or TPs as to the reason for their withdrawal from training. It was suggested that this information would be very useful, and that if possible the VN department should contact those TPs which had withdrawn to ask for the reasons, or with the assistance of the Communications department, using Survey Monkey.

Continuing Professional Development – Annual audit 2014

38. The Sub-Committee noted a paper setting out the summary of results for the 2014 CPD audit. The report would also be submitted to VN Council at its meeting in May. It was reported that the CPD Officer intended to conduct a further breakdown of the figures in due course. The Sub-Committee expressed considerable concern that there were twenty RVNs who had been included in the annual audits for 2012, 2013 and 2014, and who despite reminders, had failed to respond to any of these audits, even though remaining active on the Register. It was suggested that before taking this further, it would be advisable to ensure that the internal systems are robust and that these nurses are receiving other RCVS correspondence.

39. It was confirmed that when completing their annual renewal, nurses are asked to confirm that they comply with the CPD requirements. It was agreed to request that future audits include a check as to whether this confirmation has been provided.

Post Registration Qualifications

DipAVN monitoring report

40. The Qualifications Officer reported that she started to review the data on the nurses currently enrolled for the DipAVN. It had not been possible to provide an accurate summary of the progress of the current candidates in time for the meeting, due to time constraints and the need to ensure that all data had been transferred into the iMis database. It was hoped that a report would be available for the next meeting.

DipAVN external examiner guidance

41. It was noted that the current external examiner for the DipAVN had now left the industry and a new external examiner needed to be recruited. The Sub-Committee considered and agreed a draft job specification and proposed selection process. The post would be advertised and a selection panel would need to be formed to carry out the interviews.

Items for publication

42. The Communications Officer noted a number of items for inclusion in forthcoming publications including:
   - A press release on changes to the process for veterinary nurses trained outside the UK
   - CPD audit
   - Vacancy for DipAVN external examiner
   - Review of Day One Skills
• TP numbers and reasons for withdrawal of TPs

Any other business

43. Terms of Reference and membership of Sub-Committee. The current membership of the Sub-Committee was noted. It was reported that the Sector Skills Council (Lantra) representative was finding difficulties in arranging to attend the meetings. It was agreed that if it was no longer possible or appropriate for Lantra to provide a representative, consideration should be given to advertising for an employer representative. The membership of the Sub-Committee and terms of reference would be reviewed at the next meeting.

Date of meetings in 2015

44. The following dates were confirmed:
Monday 29 June 2015
Monday 16 November 2015
The meetings would start at 11.00am
| Meeting                          | Veterinary Nurse Education Sub-Committee  
|                                 | Veterinary Nurses Council               |
| Date                            | 5 May 2015                              |
| Title                           | Audit of Veterinary Nurses’ CPD         |
| Classification                  | Unclassified                            |
| Summary                         | Summary of results for the 2014 CPD Audit |
| Decisions required              | none                                    |
| Attachments                     | Annex A – Chart showing the number of hours of CPD over the three year period completed by active RVNs and the average number of CPD hours per year |
| Author                          | Jenny Soreskog-Turp                      
|                                 | Education Officer                      |
|                                 | j.soreskog-turp@rcvs.org.uk             |
|                                 | 0207 202 0710                           |
2014 Audit of Registered Veterinary Nurses’ CPD

Background

1. The requirement for registered veterinary nurses (RVNs) to undertake a minimum of 45 hours of continuing professional development (CPD) over a three-year period, averaging at 15 hours per year, commenced with the opening of the Register in September 2007.

2. The audit carried out in 2014 was the fifth annual audit of a sample of veterinary nurses’ CPD records.

Purpose of audit

3. The aim of the audit was to enable the College to evaluate compliance with the requirement to undertake 45 hours over a three year period, in addition to raising awareness of the obligations set out in the Code of Professional Conduct and providing a picture of the average uptake across the profession.

Procedure

4. The audit included three groups of RVNs.

5. **Group 1.** A sample of 8% of RVNs who have been registered for a period of at least three years without a break. This sample covered all UK postal areas and a few overseas resident nurses, and excluded those who had been selected for audit in 2013, with the exception of those in Groups 2 and 3 below. These RVNs were asked to supply information covering three years (2011, 2012 and 2013).

6. **Group 2.** RVNs who submitted a return in 2013 but fell some hours short of the overall requirement. RVNs who had completed fewer than 40 hours in the three-year period covered by the 2013 audit were only required to submit their CPD record for 2013.

7. **Group 3.** RVNs who, despite reminders, failed to respond to the request to submit their CPD records in 2013, and yet remain active on the Register of Veterinary Nurses. These nurses were asked to submit their records covering the three year period (2011, 2012 and 2013), and were specifically reminded of the requirement to provide the RCVS with CPD records when requested to do so.

8. Nurses were asked to either send photocopies of their CPD record card for the required period, or to confirm that they have recorded their CPD using the online professional development record (PDR) so that the annual totals can be checked by the RCVS.

9. Reminder letters were sent to all non-responders in December 2014.

10. Some of those who have responded have now voluntarily removed their names from the register.
### Summary of returns

(as at 08/01/2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number requested</th>
<th>Responses received</th>
<th>Number and % achieving less than 45 hours (active RVNs only)</th>
<th>Number and % achieving 45 hours or more (active RVNs only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>489 (93.1%)</td>
<td>120 (24.5%)</td>
<td>369 (75.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>182 (90.5%)</td>
<td>107(58.7%)</td>
<td>75 (41.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>47 (53.4%)</td>
<td>31 (65.9%)</td>
<td>16 (34.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 2014</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>718 (88.2%)</td>
<td>258 (35.9%)</td>
<td>460 (64.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 2013</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>847 (88.2%)</td>
<td>302 (36.2%)</td>
<td>532 (63.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

96 RVNs who achieved less than 45 hours for this audit period have made up the hours in 2014.

Number of RVNs in audit completing CPD online = 424(59 %) compared to 174 in 2013 audit.

Charts showing the number of hours of CPD over the three year period, completed by active RVNs and the Average number of CPD hours per year can be found in the attached, Annex A.

### Additional comments:

- As in previous years, the most frequent reasons given for not having completed the required hours of CPD were maternity leave and family commitments, and part time working. A number of RVNs said they were not aware that the requirement to undertake CPD remained in place if they were on the register, even if on maternity leave.

- There are still a number of RVNs who think that they can only count formal learning such as attending courses towards their CPD.

- Due to the requirement to cover all areas of the UK, nurses from some areas are more likely to have been included in more than one audit than those in areas such as the South East with a higher proportion of RVNs.

- 20 RVNs have been included in the audits for 2012, 2013 and 2014 but not responded to any of them.

- Further analysis of the type of CPD undertaken can be carried out and presented at the next meeting.
Average number of CPD Hours per Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average number of CPD Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### RVNs' CPD Hours over 3 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CPD hours over three years</th>
<th>RVNs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-55</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-100</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100+</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Bar chart showing CPD hours over 3 years]

VNC May 15 AI 09 Annex A
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Meeting</strong></th>
<th>Veterinary Nurses Council</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>5 May 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
<td>English Language Testing for EU Registrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classification</strong></td>
<td>Unclassified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>This paper updates the VNC on developments regarding the English language testing of EU registrants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decisions required</strong></td>
<td>For VNC to confirm that they are content with the College’s approach.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Attachments**  | Annex A  Draft Statutory Instrument  
Annex B  Draft Impact Assessment |
| **Author**       | Ben Myring  
Policy and Public Affairs Officer  
b.myring@rcvs.org.uk |
**English Language Testing EU Registrants**

**Background**

1. Every year around half of all new veterinary surgeon registrants with the RCVS come from overseas and the majority of these are from EU or EEA countries. Due to the way the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ) Directive has been implemented in the UK, the College has no power to test the English language competency of graduates from these countries. Veterinary surgeons are considered a sectoral profession under the Directive, and so automatic mutual recognition of veterinary surgeons has applied.

2. The comparable figure for veterinary nurses is much lower, at approximately 6% of VNAs annually. However, this figure is rising (13% to date in 2015). Veterinary nursing is a much more diverse profession across the European Union than is the case for veterinary surgery, and so automatic recognition does not apply. It is instead subject to the Directive’s ‘General System’ which gives more room for assessment and adaptive training before an EU applicant can register in the UK. However, testing on the basis of language previously appeared to be ruled out due to the way the Directive was implemented in the UK.

3. As previously reported, on 17 January 2014, a revised Directive came into force and 2005/36/EC has been updated by 2013/55/EU. The new Directive makes a number of important changes to the mobility of professionals across Europe, including clarifying and reinforcing the role of competent authorities in order to apply language controls. Arguably, the 2013 Directive confirms what might have been possible with the 2005 Directive.

**Issues**

4. The College has held series of meetings with Defra officials since 2013 to consider how English language testing might be implemented. In the course of these discussions it became apparent that there were several issues which would need to be overcome before language testing could be applied.

5. First, the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) 1966 specifies those things that the Registrar may request from a European applicant in order for them to enter the register of veterinary surgeons. This list does not include any mention of proof of language ability, therefore the RCVS has no power to test English language ability or request proof of ability prior to the registration of a European veterinary surgeon applicant. In order to implement a system of language testing therefore, the VSA needs to be amended. No such amendment is necessary to implement testing for veterinary nurses, although the veterinary nursing registration rules will need to be amended.

6. Second, under the revised MRPQ the recognition of a qualification and registration are two distinct processes and language testing can only take place after the recognition of the applicant’s qualification. This creates a problem for the RCVS because, under normal circumstances, the recognition of a qualification is not a separate process. The RCVS will need to establish an acceptable method of separating these processes, if language testing is to be applied. Again this issue is easier to resolve for veterinary nurses through the registration rules under the Charter.
7. Third, it is important to note that the RCVS will not be able to undertake blanket testing of all EU registrants and will only be able to test applicants, or those already on the register if there are 'serious and concrete doubts about the sufficiency of their English language knowledge'. It is suggested that a similar approach should apply for veterinary nurses. The Registrar will decide whether there are such serious or concrete doubts.

8. Fourthly, it will be necessary to develop a fair and objective system for testing applicants or registrants when the RCVS has 'serious and concrete doubt about the sufficiency of the professional's language knowledge'.

**Amending the VSA**

8. In order to persuade the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Department leading on the transposition of the new Directive, of the need to be able to test the language of EU veterinary surgeon registrants, the RCVS worked closely with Defra during the autumn of 2014 in order to build an evidence based case that sought to quantify the risk that EU registrants with poor English language ability currently presented to public health and animal welfare. This was successful, and Defra have confirmed that the VSA can be amended using an Order in Council during the transposition of the new Directive (which must be complete by January 2016). Further, the case for reform has been accepted by BIS. A Statutory Instrument has been drafted and can be found as an annex A to this paper.

**Veterinary nurses**

9. Implementation of language testing for VN applicants should proceed simultaneously with testing for veterinary surgeons. In due course the veterinary nursing registration rules will need to be amended to implement language testing for VN applicants where the College has ‘serious and concrete doubts’. VNC will be presented with proposed amendments at its next meeting.

**How would ‘serious and concrete doubts’ be defined?**

10. Were the SI to be implemented, during the registration process applicants would be asked a series of questions concerning their language qualifications, experience and general ability to use the English language; this would effectively be a process of self-certification. The questions would focus on whether applicants could show a copy of a qualification obtained in English, an appropriate qualification attesting their English skills or could demonstrate professional experience of working in the UK or an English-speaking country. If an applicant answered yes to any of these questions they would fulfil the English language aspect of the registration procedure.

11. Should an applicant answer no to all four of the proposed questions concerning their language competence, the applicant would be recommended to remedy this via an appropriate language course or gain experience in an English-speaking veterinary practice (working in a non-veterinary capacity). Prior to their registration, the applicant would be required to pass an appropriate language test, unless, having worked in the UK in a non-veterinary capacity, s/he could
subsequently attest to their English language skills. Thus, applicants may delay their application and improve their English language and reapply.

12. If an EU applicant is registered and subsequently there are serious and concrete doubts, the Registrar, may remove their name from the register until s/he has passed an appropriate language test.

What would language testing involve?

12. We are proposing that the test be (or will be based upon) the Occupational English Test (OET) provided by Cambridge Language Assessment (CLA), who also administer the IELTS examination. This test is tailored to specific sectors, including the veterinary profession. It is currently recognised by a wide range of regulatory organisations, including the Australian Medical and Dental Boards, and the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council. The test is in four sections covering four skill categories (listening, reading, writing, speaking), with two sittings per year. The College has conducted preliminary discussions with CLA about creating a specific test for veterinary surgeons, and a similar test could be specified for veterinary nurses. Further discussions will be conducted with CLA during 2015 to finalise the details of these tests.

13. Should a candidate wish to take a test between sittings of the OET the College would accept the IELTS test, for which we would expect them to pass at level 6 (defined as ‘Competent User’). The College understands that any requirement at a higher level would be considered overly restrictive. It should be noted that the current level required for the statutory examination is IELTS level 7, so there will be an inconsistency in the system that may need to be considered.

What if concrete evidence of English language deficiency emerged during or after registration?

14. If the self-declaration was shown to be manifestly wrong (for example, if the questions have not been understood at the registration interview), the College would decline to add the applicants name to the Register and give appropriate recommendations concerning improving their English.

15. If evidence emerged after an applicant had been registered then the College would have several options. The most serious cases would be referred to our Disciplinary Committee. Other cases would be dealt with under our Performance Protocol; the veterinary surgeon may be asked to make pass the language test within a fixed period, and undertake to refrain from practising any area of veterinary surgery where their lack of language competence poses risks.

Going forward

16. The proposed amendments to the VSA with respect to language testing now needs to go to formal consultation. Assuming that plans are not changed by the outcome of the 2015 election, Defra is expected to consult in July 2015, and the directive must be implemented by January 2016. Defra has stated that they cannot run two consultations on amendments to the VSA consecutively, consequently if Defra were to consult on reforming governance at the RCVS then this issue would form part of a consultation package together with language testing.
17. While we await confirmation that the consultation will be proceeding in July, the College will continue to hold discussions with CLT about developing the appropriate language tests for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses.

Decision

18. VNC are asked to confirm that they are content for the MRPQ (and thus language testing) to be implemented for veterinary nurses in a similar manner to and simultaneously with the implementation for veterinary surgeons.
2014 No.

VETERINARY SURGEONS

Veterinary Surgeons’ Qualifications (Knowledge of English) Regulations 2014

Made - - - - ***
Laid before Parliament ***
Coming into force - - ***

The Secretary of State is designated for the purposes of section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972 in relation to the recognition of higher-education diplomas, formal qualifications, or experience in the occupation, required for the pursuit of professions or occupations. Exercising the powers conferred on the Secretary of State by section 2(2) of, as read with paragraph 1A of Schedule 2 to, the European Communities Act, the Secretary of State makes the following Regulations.

Title and commencement

1. These Regulations—
   (a) may be cited as the Veterinary Surgeons (Knowledge of English) Regulations 2014; and
   (b) come into force on.

Amendments to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966

2. The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966(a) is amended as follows—
   (a) after section 5A(3)(e) add—
       “(e) a declaration signed by the person confirming that they have a knowledge of English sufficient to practice as a veterinary surgeon in the United Kingdom.”
   (b) after section 5A(11) add—
       “(12) Where the registrar has reason to believe that a person registered, or applying to be registered, under sub-section (1) does not have a knowledge of English sufficient to practise as a veterinary surgeon in the United Kingdom the registrar must require that person to demonstrate, by whatever means the registrar may reasonably select, that they have a sufficient knowledge of English.
       (13) Where, under sub-section 12, the registrar requires a person to demonstrate that they have a sufficient knowledge of English the registrar may prohibit that person from practising as a veterinary surgeon until they have done so.
       (14) Where a person registered, or applying to be registered, under sub-section (1) fails to demonstrate a sufficient knowledge of English the registrar must remove that person from the register or refuse to register them.”

(a) 1966 c. 36.
Review

3.—(1) The Secretary of State must from time to time—
   (a) carry out a review of these Regulations;
   (b) set out the conclusions of the review in a report; and
   (c) publish the report.

(2) The report must in particular—
   (a) set out the objectives intended to be achieved by these Regulations;
   (b) assess the extent to which those objectives are achieved; and
   (c) assess whether those objectives remain appropriate and, if so, the extent to which they could be achieved in a less burdensome way.

(3) The first report under this regulation must be published before the end of the period of five years beginning with the day on which these Regulations come into force.

Name

Address Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Date Department

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

These Regulations amend the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (1996 c.36) in order to implement an amendment to Council Directive 2005/36 (OJ No L 255 30.9.05 p. 22) which requires professionals benefitting from mutual recognition of qualifications to have sufficient language skills to practice their profession in another member State.
## Defra Policy Appraisal Statement (PAS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Proposal</th>
<th>Language Control for Veterinary Surgeons: Proposed changes to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defra Policy Area</td>
<td>Plant and Animal Health: Veterinary Professional Services Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected Date Of Implementation</td>
<td>18/01/2016 [EU Transposition Deadline]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Driver</td>
<td>EU Measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent of Policy</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Lead Departmental Contact | Name: Eileen Ashamu  
Email Address: Eileen.Ashamu@defra.gsi.gov.uk  
Contact Number: 0207 238 4437 |

- Have you arranged a PAS meeting with your Economist/Lawyer/Better Regulation/Social Researcher and any other relevant analyst? Yes
- Date of PAS meeting 22/09/14
- Does the proposal regulate or deregulate business, or concern the regulation of business? The proposal is regulatory. It concerns the regulation of migrant EU veterinary surgeons

## Summary: Rationale for Intervention and Options

Article 21 (1) of the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualification Directive (MRPQ or PQD) 2005/36 EU allows automatic recognition of the qualification of veterinary surgeons whose degrees are listed in Annex V of the Directive subject to meeting the necessary minimum training criteria. Article 53 of this Directive also places an obligation on professionals to have the necessary language skills to practise their profession in the host Member State.

The Directive amended by 2013/55 EC provides a derogation in Article 1(41) which permits competent authorities to ensure that professionals comply with the obligation to have the necessary language skills to practise their profession in the host Member State. The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 transpose the requirements of the Directive, Government intervention is needed to amend the Act to ensure that the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) comply with the EU Directive.

## Summary of the policy outcomes desired.

To strengthen the provisions that already exist in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 on registration to enable the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons carry out proportionate checks on EU vets where there is concern around their English language capability.

### Potential Policy Options

We have considered three options for the proposed measure:

- **Baseline Option – Do Nothing:** Continue with automatic registration of migrant EU vets irrespective of whether they are proficient in English language or not.
Option 1 – Automatic registration of all EU vets with immediate referral to Professional Conduct Department where there is evidence of English language incompetence.

Option 2 – Apply language controls where there is evidence of English language incompetence. The control in the first instance would be an informal questions asked during the registration process. If answers are unsatisfactory, applicants may be asked to take a formal test based on the Occupational English Test provided by Cambridge Language Assessment. Those who do not want to take the test may be given the opportunity to improve their language skills through various routes such as working in a veterinary practice in a non-veterinary surgeon capacity, do voluntary work to improve their English and then asked to take the test or reapply again.

| Will measure be subject to “One-In, Two-Out” (OITO)? | No |
| Will the measure create a new criminal offence? | No |
| Will you need a new power of entry? | No |
| Have you considered who will enforce the regulations | Yes |
| Will the measure impact on small and micro-business? | Yes |
| Will the measure be unviable if small and micro-business are excluded? | Yes |
| Will the measure impact on house builders? | No |
| Will the measure be politically sensitive or potentially controversial? | No |

Additional Evidence Needed

Evidence from the RCVS Registration Department has shown that over the years, concerns have been raised about a proportion of EU vets who have shown incompetence in English language skills during the registration exercise. For example in the last five years, there were serious concerns about the ability of some registrants to communicate in English. Around 8 graduates brought a translator along to their registration session, another 8 graduates were observed copying from other candidates as they could not understand nor follow the ‘Registration Guidance in English’. Recent data culled from the RCVS telephone data informs that there is an average of 4 prospective or active applicants per month who are unable to satisfactorily communicate their requests over the telephone.

However, due to the fact that there were no provisions available in the Directive then to allow competent authorities ensure compliance with language competence requirements, RCVS had to register these vets even though they are incompetent in English language.

Options that have been ruled out (Why have these been ruled out?):

Base line option – do nothing has been ruled out as it does not meet the requirements of the EU Directive.

Option 1 – (automatic registration of all EU vets with immediate referral to the Professional Conduct Department) has also been ruled out because of the excessive administrative burden it would place on the vet and the RCVS.

Costs on the RCVS: In the current system all cases are assessed and considered by the Case Examiners Group before a decision is then made for referral to the Disciplinary Committees. Where the case is deemed to be an arguable one, it is referred to the
Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC), who after consideration decides on the matter or refer it to the Disciplinary Committees (DC).

On average, from a complaint being received by the College, it takes two years to progress to the DC hearing. A language control case which has reached DC stage would likely be a 1-2 day hearing with a total cost of around £12K-£15K. This would include the PIC stages and all the gathering of evidence and statements.

In the last five years, 118 EU-qualified vets have been referred to PIC, of whom 18 had problems communicating in English. During this period, 19 EU vets have been referred to DC, of whom 6 had problems communicating in English – 2 required interpreters.

If the vet is unhappy with the decision of DC, an appeal could be made to the Privy Council. This means that the RCVS would need to hire a barrister at a cost of £10,000 per day which includes the cost of investigations. The estimated cost of a judicial review is usually in the region of £50,000-£100,000. If the RCVS were to be unsuccessful in this, it would also be liable to pay all or part of the costs of the appellant.

Cost to the vet: In most cases, due to English language deficiency, the vet would hire an interpreter. In general, the cost of an interpreter can vary depending on the length of the event, the venue and their experience. This is around £150-£350 per person per day.

Minimum cost to the vet would be £150 or £350 if the hearing lasts for one day but if the hearing lasts for up to 2 days, this would be £300 or £700 – these are costs for the interpreter alone we have not estimated costs for loss of earnings by the vet. If the vet made an appeal against DC hearing, they would need to hire a barrister which could cost around £1,350-£3,000 per day. The rate to be paid would depend on the complexity of the case and the required evidence and the seniority of the barrister.

**Preferred Option**

Option 2 is the preferred option. The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons will carry out an informal/formal language test (depending on the situation) where an applicant demonstrates inadequate knowledge of English language during the registration exercise or at any stage of their career.

**Initial Assessment of business impact**

| Options result in additional costs to business | There would be some potential costs to EU vets who have to sit the language tests. This is estimated to be around £326. |
| Costs exceed £1M per year? | No. |

The measure would only affect all EU veterinary surgeons wishing to practise their profession in the UK. Language controls would apply to those EU vets who have shown evidence of English language incompetence. Those affected would be required to sit a test which would cost £326 or where agreed, allowed to look for various opportunities to improve their English language skills such as in a voluntary capacity or undertake activities as a non-veterinary in a veterinary practice. After a period of time once they are confident of their English language skills they can reapply to register to practice in the UK.
RCVS envisages that the imposition of a language testing scheme will be cost neutral. The proposed scheme will be administered by existing staff in the Registration, Professional Conduct and Education Departments. Furthermore, any additional costs will likely be offset by a reduction in the number of complaints being referred to PIC/DC.

The main benefit of this option will be that EU veterinary surgeons will be able to carry out their work to a sufficient standard which would mean increased public confidence in these EU vets as those registered by the RCVS would have met the professional standards criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One-in, Two-out status (OITO)</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
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</table>

**OITO Decision Justification**

This proposal is considered to be out of scope of OITO rules, as it relates to aligning UK legislation with EU requirements. The current UK legislation for the veterinary profession does not meet EU recommendations for professionals to have the necessary language skills to practice their profession in the host Member State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is RPC Approval needed?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can measure be fast-tracked (triage measure)?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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**Rationale for Fast Track clearance route**

It is a low cost measure

**Internal Sign Off:** We have considered the problem and desired outcomes and have agreed the options and evidence required to enable those options to be further assessed and compared

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Lead</td>
<td>Eileen Ashamu</td>
<td>17/09/2014</td>
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<td>Economist</td>
<td>Robert Young</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better Regulation</td>
<td>Caroline O’Flaherty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Director</td>
<td>Richard Drummond</td>
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1. Initial data to be transferred to the Policy Tracker

**Link:** [https://defra.sharepoint.com/PolicyTracker](https://defra.sharepoint.com/PolicyTracker)

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<td>Target date for call for evidence consultation</td>
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<td><strong>Meeting</strong></td>
<td>Veterinary Nurses Council</td>
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<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>5 May 2015</td>
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<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
<td>Awarding Body Board Report</td>
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<td><strong>Classification</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Decisions required</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Attachments</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Author</strong></td>
<td>Annette Amato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deputy Head of Veterinary Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0207 202 0713</td>
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<tr>
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<td><a href="mailto:a.amato@rcvs.org.uk">a.amato@rcvs.org.uk</a></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

Veterinary Nurse Awarding Body Board

Minutes of a Meeting held on 24 March 2015

Members:  
Mr Niall Connell - RCVS Council – Chairman
Mrs Victoria Aspinall - Course provider representative
Mrs Julie Dugmore - RCVS Awarding Body Manager (Head of Veterinary Nursing)
Mrs Helen Farrant - BVNA
Mrs Victoria Hedges - Examinations Manager
* Dr Frances Henson - BEVA
* Mrs Nicola Johnson - Course provider representative
* Miss Hilary Orpet - VN Council
* Mrs Susan Paterson - BSAVA
Mrs Denise Prisk - Chief Scrutineer for VN Examinations
* Mrs Carrie Ryan - Landex
* Mrs Alison Santos - Course provider representative
Mrs Stephanie Writer-Davies - SPVS

*absent

In attendance: Mrs Annette Amato - Committee Secretary

Apologies for Absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Nicola Johnson, Miss Hilary Orpet, Mrs Susan Paterson and Mrs Alison Santos. The meeting was conducted by teleconference.

Declarations of interest

2. Mrs Prisk reported that she is still the Chief Examiner for Central Qualifications Awarding organisation. Mrs Helen Farrant is an examiner for Central Qualifications and City & Guilds Awarding Organisations.

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2014

3. The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2014 which had been previously circulated were accepted as a correct record.

Awarding Body closure update

4. The Head of Veterinary Nursing reported that the Awarding Body would formally close on 1 December 2015. There will be one further session of theory and practical examinations, both to take place in June, and the results will be issued in July. The final date on which certificates could be issued was 30 November 2015.
5. There are currently approximately 75 students still registered for the Level 3 Diploma. Each student has been written to twice since the last meeting of the Board to notify them of the closure and the timeline for the last examinations. Members of VN department staff are also in regular contact with the centres regarding active students, to resolve any issues. Assistance will be provided for any students remaining in the system, to discuss possible transfer to either City & Guilds or Central Qualifications to complete their Diploma, depending on their associated college.

Awarding Body Annual Report 2014

6. The Head of Veterinary Nursing presented the draft annual report for 2014. This followed the same format as previous annual reports. The Awarding Body continues to provide regular updates to Ofqual and the Welsh equivalent (DCELLS).

Report from Examinations Sub-Committee

7. The Board noted the Minutes of the meeting of the Examinations Sub-Committee held on 17 February 2015. An error in one of the figures regarding examination candidates was noted and would be corrected.

8. In response to a query on how the RCVS will monitor other Level 3 Diploma qualifications in the future, it was confirmed that as part of its regulatory remit, the RCVS carries out regular monitoring and quality audits of all Awarding Organisations and Higher Education Institutions delivering accredited qualifications. Reports are made to the Education Sub-Committee of VN Council. AOs and HEIs are risk banded and those with a higher level of risk are subject to a greater level of monitoring activity. The criteria and guidance for AOs and HEIs are included in a new handbook which is due to be published in the next few weeks.

Date of final meeting

9. The final meeting of the Board would take place on Monday 30 November at 2.00pm, by teleconference. This would enable the Board to receive reports on the final sets of examinations and certifications, and the transfer of any remaining students.

Any other business

10. No other issues were raised.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Meeting</strong></th>
<th>Veterinary Nurses Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>5 May 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
<td>Report on overseas applications to register 2014/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classification</strong></td>
<td>Unclassified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>This paper summarises the applications for registration from nurses trained outside the UK. It covers the period between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decisions required</strong></td>
<td>By the Veterinary Nurses Council:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To note details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attachments</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author</strong></td>
<td>Victoria Hedges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examinations Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0207 202 0782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:v.hedges@rcvs.org.uk">v.hedges@rcvs.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annah Bhebe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examinations Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>020 7202 0715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:a.bhebe@rcvs.org.uk">a.bhebe@rcvs.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overseas applications to register 2014/15

Background

1. VN Council and VN Education Sub-Committee have both agreed on the criteria by which veterinary nurses who train outside the UK can apply to enter the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses. This is summarised below.

Registration of veterinary nurses trained within the EU/EEA

2. The EU directive 2013/55/EU sets out the general system for the recognition of evidence of training for the purpose of establishment in the host country. Qualifications must be recognised if the applicant’s level of professional qualification is at least equivalent to the level immediately below that required in the host country. Recognition must also be granted to migrants whose profession is not regulated in the country of origin but who have worked full-time in that profession for two years. Under certain restricted conditions, the host country may impose compensation measures, i.e. an adaptation period of up to three years or an aptitude test. If the host country requires applicants to comply with such compensation measures, it must take into account their professional experience, and the applicant may in principle choose between the adaptation period or the aptitude test.

3. The RCVS currently accept holders of ACOVENE (the European Accreditation Committee for Veterinary Nurse Educations) accredited qualifications and those on a professional register in their country of origin to apply to enter the register directly.

4. Where the holder of an EU veterinary nursing qualification is neither registered nor from an ACOVENE accredited institution their qualification is assessed for equivalence.

5. When receiving an application from an EU trained veterinary nurse we are obliged to work on the default assumption that their qualification will be recognised but where there are significant differences in the qualification we can request for them to take an aptitude test and/or complete a period of supervised adaptation.

6. All applications need to include attestations of competence of evidence of formal qualifications issued by a competent authority in a member state. The EU Directive is very clear that any requirement for tests/adaptations, or refusal to recognise the qualification, must be based on strong grounds which are both justifiable and proportionate. We document the decision and this information is provided to the applicant.

Registration of veterinary nurses trained outside of the EU/EEA

7. Currently where a qualification has been achieved outside the EU/EEA the application is sent to the equivalency officer for consideration. Where a large number of applications are received from one country/awarding organisation, VNC is asked to consider applying the same assessment to all applicants from that country/awarding organisation. This is the case for applications received from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the USA. Holders of
certain qualifications from these countries do not have their qualification assessed but are required to pass the RCVS Pre-registration examination.

8. All other applications from outside the EU/EEA are assessed on a case by case basis. Where the training is similar to that in the UK the applicant is permitted to enter the RCVS Pre-registration examination, regardless of where the nurse has trained. If their training time is significantly less than that required of UK nurses a period of adaptation must also be completed.

2014/15 Applications

9. The tables below show the details of applications received between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015. The figures for 2013/2014 are also shown in brackets for comparison.

10. There is a 20% increase in applications received during this period.

11. Fewer applications are now pending than in previous years. This is because the application and assessment process has become more refined and both the applicant and assessor receive better guidance from the RCVS.

12. The number of applicants proceeding to registration has increased by 72%. Many of these applied in 2013 and either achieved the Pre-registration examination or completed the required Period of Supervised Adaptation during 2014/2015.

13. Approximately 1.8% (228) RVNs currently on the register were training outside the UK.

14. Six percent of new registrants between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2105 were trained outside the UK.
### Table 1 Applications for entry onto the register by nurses trained outside the UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Applications</th>
<th>Accepted</th>
<th>Adaptation</th>
<th>Pending</th>
<th>Rejected</th>
<th>Registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU applicants</td>
<td>75 (55)</td>
<td>51 (35)</td>
<td>15 (2)</td>
<td>8 (17)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>49 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-EU applicants</td>
<td>44 (44)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>39 (37)</td>
<td>1 (7)</td>
<td>4 (0)</td>
<td>18 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>119 (99)</td>
<td>51 (35)</td>
<td>54 (39)</td>
<td>9 (24)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>67 (39)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2 Applications for entry onto the register by nurses trained within the EU/EEA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total Applications</th>
<th>Accepted</th>
<th>Adaptation</th>
<th>Pending</th>
<th>Rejected</th>
<th>Registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>0 (2)</td>
<td>0 (2)</td>
<td>0 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
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<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
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<td>France</td>
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<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
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<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
<td>3 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>4 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1 (6)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>0 (4)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>3 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>2 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>2 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>16 (11)</td>
<td>3 (5)</td>
<td>10 (1)</td>
<td>3 (5)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>6 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Ireland</td>
<td>44 (24)</td>
<td>43 (21)</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>0 (3)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>33 (21)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
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<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
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<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
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<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>3 (0)</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2 (0)</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Total Applications</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td>Adaptation</td>
<td>Pending</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>Registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
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<td>------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>18 (22)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>18 (21)</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>6 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>2 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>3 (0)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>12 (9)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>12 (6)</td>
<td>0 (3)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>5 (0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>2 (5)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2 (5)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>5 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>6 (6)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5 (4)</td>
<td>0 (2)</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>0 (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:**
- **Accepted** Application accepted without further requirement. This is only applicable for nurses trained with the EU/EEA.
- **Adaptation** Additional assessment required. This could take the form of a Period of Supervised Adaptation (PSA) in a UK veterinary practice and/or a passing the RCVS Pre-registration examinations. The Pre-registration examination is compulsory for nurses trained outside the EU/EEA.
- **Pending** Application is incomplete and awaiting further information.
- **Rejected** Applicant does not meet the minimum RCVS requirement for entry onto the register of veterinary nurses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Veterinary Nurses Council &amp; Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>5 May 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>RVN PI Committee Chairman’s Report to VN Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification</td>
<td>Unclassified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>This report sets out the work of the Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) Preliminary Investigation (PI) Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions required</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachments</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Michael Hepper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barrister/Chief Investigator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:m.hepper@rcvs.org.uk">m.hepper@rcvs.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eleanor Ferguson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solicitor/Head of Professional Conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>020 7202 0718</td>
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Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

Registered Veterinary Nurses Preliminary Investigation Committee

RVN Chairman’s report to VN Council 5 May 2015

Introduction

Since the last Report to Council there has been one meeting of the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee (24 February 2015). As there was no new business and no new cases, the Chairman cancelled the RVN PIC meeting scheduled for 8 April 2015. The next RVN PIC meeting is on Tuesday 9 June 2015 and shall be included in the next Report to Council.

RVN Concerns received

Between January 2015 and April 2015 there were five new Concerns received against RVNs which are all under investigation by the Case Examiners Group (a veterinary and lay member on RVN PIC and a Case Manager).

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee

The total number of new cases considered by the Committee between January 2015 and April 2015 was one. This one case has been referred to the College’s solicitors for statements to be taken from relevant witnesses.

The table below shows the number, categories and stages of Concerns received against RVNs between 1 April 2011 (the date that RVNs were subject to regulation under the Rules agreed by VN and RCVS Council in November 2010) and 22 April 2015.

RVN Concerns registered between 1 April 2011 and 22 April 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description of Category</th>
<th>Number of Complaints</th>
<th>Case Examiner Group</th>
<th>RVN PIC</th>
<th>Referred to DC</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Client Confidentiality</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Fees</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Promoting the Practice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D/1</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D/2</td>
<td>24 h emergency cover</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D/3</td>
<td>Euthanasia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>D/4</td>
<td>Communication/Consent</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Running the business</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Treatment of animals by non-vet nurse</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Certification</td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>The use of Veterinary Medicine Products</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Jurisdiction of RCVS</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Negligence/Inadequate Care</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Other (for example, fraudulent registration and investigations involving other agencies)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Convictions</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Health</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>Appeals</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>Performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Restoration</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Unclassified</td>
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<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
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<td><strong>107</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Data source – Profcon computer system complaints data.

**Ongoing Investigations**

The RVN PIC committee has three ongoing cases. Two cases are adjourned pending the outcome of criminal court trials against the respective RVNs. Currently, one case has a trial date for 8 June 2015. One case (as above) is referred to the College’s solicitors for statements. These cases will be included in a future Report to VN Council.

**Health Concerns**

There are currently two RVNs on the RCVS Health Protocol. In the last Report to Council there was one RVN being considered for the Health Protocol but signed undertakings were awaited. The RVN being considered has since voluntarily removed her name from the RVN Register and therefore falls outside RCVS jurisdiction. The RVN’s registration details have been noted and the RCVS Chief Investigator will be informed if the RVN applies for her name to be restored onto the register.

**Referral to Disciplinary Committee**

Since the last report the RVN PIC Committee has not referred any new cases to the RVN Disciplinary Committee.

MDH/23/04/2015
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Veterinary Nurses Council</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>05 May 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Unpaid work placements for full time programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification</td>
<td>Unclassified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>This paper sets out proposals for a change to the current 60 week work placement requirement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decisions required</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachments</td>
<td>Annex A: Letter to centres</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annex B: Extract from VN Education publication May 2015</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Head of Veterinary Nursing</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:j.dugmore@rcvs.org.uk">j.dugmore@rcvs.org.uk</a></td>
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Unpaid work experience placements for full time programmes

Background

1. At its meeting in February 2015, during the private and confidential session, VN Council was invited to consider how the HMRC National Minimum Wage regulations affect the veterinary nurse practical training requirements.

2. Subsequently, in light of the NMWR regulations, VN Council decided to remove the current 60 week practical training requirement and amend Schedule 1 of the Veterinary Nurse Registration Rules 2014 to reflect this.

3. The requirement to complete 2,100 hours does, however, remain in force. Students will still be required to complete the Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses in their totality as these seek to assure competence at the point of registration.

4. A letter was sent to Awarding Organisations, Higher Education Institutions and centres on Friday 17 April explaining this amendment – see Annex A.

5. It should be noted that students close to the end of their training will not be expected to work unreasonable hours to complete the 2,100 hours of practical training. Where a student has completed the Day One Skills in less than 2,100 hours, this will be assessed on a case by case basis on application to register – see Annex B.

To note:

VN Council is invited to note:

6. Review of the current RCVS Day One Skills for veterinary nurses is underway. The working party is focusing on safe and effective clinical skills along with Schedule 3 activities and it is envisaged this will reduce the current 2,100 hours requirement for clinical placement.

7. A clear focus on safe and effective clinical skills will support the College’s primary regulatory role, that of protecting animal welfare and the public interest.

8. RCVS Council will be asked to accept the revisions to Schedule 1 of the Veterinary Nurse Registration Rules 2014 that have been agreed by VN Council.
Dear Sir/Madam

Re: National Minimum Wage Regulations and Veterinary Nurse Practical Training

VN Council has recently considered how the HMRC National Minimum Wage regulations (NMWR) affect the veterinary nurse practical training requirements, particularly unpaid work placements and has decided to remove the current 60 week practical training requirement. The requirement to complete 2,100 hours remains. Below is a brief summary of the issues, current legislation and changes to the current training requirements.

Background

The current Veterinary Nurse Registration Rules 2014 require that veterinary nurse training must take place over a minimum period of 94 weeks (3,290 hours), excluding annual leave and absence. The programme must include a full-time period of practical training in an approved training practice of not less than 60 weeks (2,100 hours) or an equivalent part-time period, together with a theoretical programme of not less than 700 guided learning hours. This is a pre-requisite to qualification.

Legal position

Over the years, there have been successive amendments to the NMWR 1999. The NMWR in amended form provide for complete and partial exemptions from the requirement to pay national minimum wage.

Regulation 12 provides for exemptions and relaxations from the NMW requirements as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph N°</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Exemption from NMW</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(4A)</td>
<td>Programme led Apprenticeships</td>
<td>Full exemption</td>
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<tr>
<td>(5) as qualified by (5A)</td>
<td>Government or European Social Funded Schemes designed to assist in obtaining training or finding work where a student has been unable to obtain employed apprenticeship or would be classified as a ‘worker’. Sometimes described as ‘Advanced Apprenticeships’</td>
<td>Full exemption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>Practical training as part of a higher education course</td>
<td>No more than one year in duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9A)</td>
<td>Practical training as part of a further education course</td>
<td>No more than one year in duration</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The impact of the NMWR is that work experience undertaken by students as part of UK-based higher or further education courses is exempt from the national minimum wage provided the work experience placement does not exceed a period of one year. If the placement exceeds one year, national minimum wage will be payable.

Some have asked whether 52 weeks could be unpaid with the remaining 8 week period paid at NMR. It is our view that the legal effect of this is doubtful and the NMW may well be payable for the total period; not just the 8 weeks. This is because the partial exemption attaches to a period of ‘not more than one year’. Clearly, the prescribed 60 weeks is more than one year.

Additionally, Regulation 13 specifies a reduced minimum wage for all other types of apprenticeship that are not referred to as fully exempt in Regulation 12(4A) and 12(5). If an apprenticeship exemption or reduced national minimum wage is being relied upon, care must be taken to ensure that the correct scheme is in operation otherwise the training colleges or approved training practices may find themselves in breach of the NMWR. Those who wish to rely on the above exemptions or reduced wage arrangements should seek their own independent legal advice.

Changes to the training requirements

In light of the regulations, VN Council has decided to remove the current 60 week practical training requirement. As explained above, the requirement to complete 2,100 hours will, however, remain in force. Students will still be required to complete the Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses in their totality as these seek to assure competency at the point of registration.

Where a student has completed the Day One Skills in less than 2,100 hours, this will be assessed on a case by case basis on application to register.

Finally, there are some ongoing discussions around the current list of Day One Skills and there may be further changes to practical training arrangements in the future.

If you have any further questions about the current changes to veterinary nurse training, please contact my colleague Julie Dugmore, Head of Veterinary Nursing on j.dugmore@rcvs.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Gordon Hockey
Registrar / Director of Legal Services
Section for inclusion in VN Education publication May 2015

Student VNs and the National Minimum Wage
Changes to current training requirements

Last month we sent letters to all colleges and higher education institutions that offer veterinary nursing training to inform them of a VN Council decision to remove the requirement to undertake 60 weeks of practical training in response to HM Revenue & Customs National Minimum Wage Regulations (NMWR).

Under the current NMWR, work experience undertaken by students as part of UK-based higher or further education courses is exempt from the national minimum wage provided that the work experience placement does not exceed a period of one year.

Although the 60 weeks requirement has now been removed the requirement to complete 2,100 hours will, however, remain in force and students will still be required to complete the Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses as assurance of their competency at the point of registration.

Students close to the end of their training will not be expected to work unreasonable hours to complete the requirement of 2,100 hours of practical training. If a student completes the Day One Skills in less than 2,100 hours, this will not necessarily preclude them from joining the Register and applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Please bear in mind that there are ongoing discussions around our current list of Day One Skills (see Page xx).

If you have any other questions about the changes to veterinary nurse training please contact Julie Dugmore, Head of Veterinary Nursing, on j.dugmore@rcvs.org.uk

ENDS

Word count: 260