



# Post Registration Framework for Veterinary Nursing

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# Award framework

## Background

1. This document sets out the detailed rules for the administration of the RCVS Post Registration framework for the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing.
2. It has been written for the guidance of universities, awarding organisations and candidates.
3. The purpose of the framework is to provide accessible, flexible and professionally recordable post-registration awards for veterinary nurses from any level of study in order to inform an enhanced level of veterinary nursing practice.

## Introduction

4. The post registration veterinary nursing framework incorporates the requirements set out by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). It permits the RCVS to maintain a level of post registration professional standards for veterinary nurses, whilst allowing universities across the four nations of the UK to meet the required academic standards set by QAA.
5. The framework is designed so that registered veterinary nurses from any academic background have the opportunity to gain a RCVS accredited post- registration qualification.
6. The framework sets out the minimum academic requirements that are acceptable to the RCVS in order to gain an award. However, universities and other organisations are free to develop courses above this minimum level, in order to provide veterinary nurses with an opportunity for academic progression alongside professional development.

7. The level descriptors in Table 1 and 2 are adapted from the QAA definition of qualifications (FHEQ Levels 6 and 7 and SCQF Levels 9, 10 and 11). They should be used as an indicator of the required level for the respective qualifications.
8. Additionally, qualifications set at the minimum level (FHEQ Level 6 and SCQF Level 9 & 10) are required to meet the QAA Veterinary Nursing Subject Benchmark Statement.

**Table 1 – Qualification level descriptors Level 6**

**Candidates will need to demonstrate:**

- a systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their area of professional practice;
- an ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline;
- conceptual understanding that enables them to:
  - devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of their area of a discipline;
  - describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline;
- an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge;
- the ability to manage their own learning, and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).

**Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:**

- apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects;
- critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution – or identify a range of solutions – to a problem;
- communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.

**And holders will have the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:**

- the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;
- decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts;
- the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

### Table 2 – Qualification level descriptors Level 7

**Candidates will need to demonstrate:**

- a systematic understanding knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice;
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;
- originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
- conceptual understanding that enables them to:
  - evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline, and;
  - evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

**Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:**

- deal with complex issues – both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.

**And will have the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:**

- the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;
- decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations, and;
- the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.



## Qualification structure

9. Annex 1 demonstrates how the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing accommodates higher education qualifications allowing access to nurses from all Registrable backgrounds. It is based on a credit accumulation system, where one credit equates to approximately 10 hours of activity by the candidate, and a minimum of 60 credits are required for the full award.
10. The 'notional' 10 hours per credit includes time spent on courses, private study and research as well as time spent putting together assignments, and other assessment related work. This is not a rigid time limit but should be used as a guide when modules are being designed. Some candidates may need to spend more or less time on modules depending on their experience.
11. To achieve the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (CertAVN), candidates must achieve a minimum of 60 credits; 40 of which must be at a minimum of FHEQ Level 6 or SCQF Level 9. Although qualifications at higher academic levels can also be undertaken.
12. The focused field of study within these qualifications must amount to a minimum of 40 credits of subject specific content, at Level 6 or above. Examples of the possible credit structures are detailed below:

L6 CertAVN	L7 CertAVN
20 credits at L5 + 40 credits at L6 (subject specific content must sit at this level)	20 credits at L6 + 40 credits at L7 (subject specific content must sit at this level)
60 credits at L6	60 credits at L7
60+ credits at L6	60+ credits at L7



## Information for candidates

13. The RCVS will hold a database of all universities and awarding organisations accredited to offer the RCVS CertAVN. Outline information is provided on the RCVS website for all potential candidates.
14. Details of current RCVS enrolment and award fees for the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing are available on the RCVS website [Fees page](#).

### Eligibility rules for candidates

15. Candidates must demonstrate the following prior to registration for the RCVS CertAVN:

<b>Qualification</b>	Potential candidates must be an RVN; or be on a comparable register in the country within which they practise.
<b>Experience</b>	Candidates must have evidence of sufficient CPD from the point of entry onto the RCVS Register for Veterinary Nurses (in line with RCVS requirements) prior to registration for the RCVS CertAVN.
<b>Access to placement</b>	During studies, candidates must be employed in, or have agreed access to placement in, a suitable professional environment, tailored to their area of focused study.

## Candidate enrolment

16. Before commencing studies, candidates must enrol with the RCVS specifying the accredited university or awarding organisation where they plan to undertake their studies and the title of the qualification.
17. The enrolment fee must be paid by each candidate via the accredited institution or awarding organisation. The amount payable is detailed on the RCVS [Fees page](#) and must be paid within three months of commencing the qualification.
18. Candidates transferring university or awarding organisation must notify the RCVS of changes to their studies, at the time of transfer.
19. Registration for the RCVS CertAVN will be valid for up to three years; as the majority of CertAVN programmes are not longer than two years, it is expected that candidates will achieve the programme requirements within three years. Should an extension be required, the university or awarding organisation must liaise with the RCVS and the candidate must pay an extension fee. Extensions will be granted for a maximum of one year; the extension process, including fee payment, must be repeated if a further extension is required.

## Accreditation of prior learning (APL)

20. The RCVS will permit accredited universities and awarding organisations to take into consideration prior certificated learning (via an APL process) in relation to the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing. Such APL must be formally awarded through the APL mechanisms in place with the university or awarding organisation concerned.
21. APL will be allowed only against accredited learning which:
  - a. can be directly and substantially matched against the outcomes of the accredited CertAVN i.e. specific credit rather than general credit;
  - b. demonstrates currency i.e. achieved within the last five years;
  - c. has not already formed part of a pre-qualifying academic award in veterinary nursing i.e. a degree, foundation degree or HND which has contributed towards initial registration as a veterinary nurse.

## Awarding the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing

22. The candidate will need to:
  - hold a registrable veterinary nursing qualification; and be on the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses or a comparable register in the country within which they practise;
  - have previously enrolled for the CertAVN with RCVS;
  - have achieved a total of 60 credits with at least 40 credits (at a minimum of Level 6), in a focused field of study through an RCVS accredited university or awarding organisation.



## Information for candidates

23. The RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing will be awarded to candidates on achieving an RCVS accredited programme of study of not less than 60 credits, of which 40 credits in a focused field of study must be at Level 6, as a minimum.
24. Candidates will need to pay a fee to RCVS when they claim their RCVS CertAVN, details of which can be found on the RCVS [Fees page](#).
25. Upon successful completion of the RCVS CertAVN, it is the responsibility of the Accredited Education Institution to submit the CertAVN Certification Application form for each candidate. This will include the transcript and fee.
26. Candidates achieving the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing will be eligible to use the post nominal CertAVN.
27. RCVS CertAVN certificates and badges will be issued to successful candidates.
28. Candidates who have achieved the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary but are not on the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses are not eligible to work as a veterinary nurse in the UK, unless they subsequently submit an application to Register through the normal [process](#).





# Accreditation of educational institutions

## General principles

29. Universities and awarding organisations are able to apply for accreditation from the RCVS, in order to deliver and assess qualifications accommodated by the RCVS framework. Successful students will then be eligible to gain the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing.
30. Accreditation is the process by which prospective universities and awarding organisations are evaluated by the RCVS for quality, based on given standards. This process is additional to the accreditation and quality monitoring processes undertaken by the national regulatory authorities (OFS, Medr, QAA, OFQUAL, SQA etc).

## The assessment of candidates

31. The RCVS will not itself undertake the assessment of individual modules but will instead devolve responsibility for this to accredited universities or awarding organisations. The aim is for the RCVS framework to become integrated with other university and awarding organisation courses and qualifications, which will both improve the coherence of CPD provision nationally, and also give candidates a greater range of academic progression pathways than has previously existed.
32. Whilst the RCVS does not prescribe the assessment methodology to be utilised, the approach will be reviewed during the accreditation and routine quality monitoring procedures to ensure the learning outcomes are fully assessed.
33. Candidates who successfully complete 60 credits of study; with a minimum of 40 credits at Level 6 or above, in a focused field of nursing, through accredited universities and awarding organisations will be entitled to apply for the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing.

## Standards of accreditation

34. Standards for accreditation are set under the following:
  - Curricula and assessment
  - Educators and assessors
  - Learning Culture



# Curricula and assessment

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

## Requirements

### 1.1 **Curricula to remain relevant in respect of contemporary veterinary nursing in a focused field of study promoting the development of advanced practice.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Curriculum framework mapping
- b. Schemes of work
- c. Assessment plans
- d. Timetables
- e. Curriculum documents
- f. Module descriptors
- g. Academic handbooks

Guidance:

These programmes must be able to demonstrate how they are advancing candidates above and beyond the licence to practise requirements. This must be focused on a specific field of veterinary nursing but does not need to be limited to clinical practice. Examples could include emergency and critical care, leadership, or community nursing. In order to maintain currency, programmes should be reviewed at regular intervals and reflect recent advances in published literature.

**1.2 Curricula and assessment weigh theory and practice learning appropriately to the programme.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Schemes of work
- b. Assessment plans
- c. Module descriptors
- d. Timetables
- e. Assessment schedules
- f. Assessment matrix
- g. Online platform

Guidance:

This requirement reflects the alignment of theory and practice; this is not referencing application to practice. Programmes must clearly demonstrate the theory credits required for completion, how the learning is weighted across the programme, and how the assessments align with the intended learning outcomes. This must be relevant to the context of the programme, which may or may not include practical requirements.

**1.3 A range of appropriate assessments are delivered, ensuring the intended learning outcomes are fully and suitably assessed.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Assessment strategies
- b. Assessment rationale
- c. Example assessments
- d. Programme specifications
- e. Module documents
- f. Assessment matrix
- g. Academic integrity policy and procedure
- h. Reasonable adjustments policy and procedure
- i. Examples of reasonable adjustments

Guidance:

Further to 1.2, assessments must be appropriately aligned with the intended learning outcomes with a clear assessment rationale. This must indicate how candidates can demonstrate their advanced learning and capability above the licence to practise level.

**1.4 Curricula and assessments are developed and evaluated by suitably experienced and qualified educators and/or practitioners, with relevant subject matter expertise who are accountable for ensuring the curriculum incorporates relevant programme outcomes.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. CV and CPD records
- b. Academic handbooks
- c. Procedure for monitoring delivery and assessment
- d. Marking descriptors and rubrics
- e. Programme outcomes



Guidance:

Each AEI is responsible for determining what 'suitable' experience and qualifications looks like, however, it should be noted that this does not mandate registration with the RCVS. It is expected that programmes are developed by subject matter experts who can demonstrate their training and experience in the relevant domain. Whilst CV and CPD records can help to demonstrate compliance with this requirement, clear examples of their work in the relevant clinical or non-clinical area should also be provided.

### **1.5 Curricula are structured and sequenced to enable candidates to manage their theory and practice learning experience effectively, reflective of the delivery approach.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Teaching plans
- b. Online platform
- c. Course information documents
- d. Schemes of work
- e. Assessment schedules
- f. Assessment matrix
- g. Candidate feedback

Guidance:

The delivery method of CertAVN programmes is not mandated and this will likely look different for each AEI. Thus, it is the remit of the AEI to determine how the programme delivery should be facilitated to best reflect the requirements and expectations of the candidates. This may include face-to-face learning, online learning, or a hybrid approach.

Curricula must also be structured in such a way as to progressively develop the candidates' knowledge and understanding, across the duration of the programme.

### **1.6 Moderation processes are in place and demonstrate that assessment is fair, reliable, and valid, and the integrity of the assessment is upheld.**

- a. Academic regulations
- b. Assessment handbook
- c. External examiner report
- d. Schemes of work
- e. Module descriptors
- f. Internal examiner and assessor procedures
- g. Fitness to study policy
- h. Reasonable adjustment policy
- i. Assessment outcomes data
- j. Staff training for assessment development

Guidance:

Moderation processes are normally included in the AEI assessment procedures. Evidence should be available showing how this is applied to the different types of assessments being used.

Clear sampling plans should be drawn up showing how and when moderation will take place (pre-assessment and post assessment) and who will be involved. The scope of the moderator needs to be clear especially where there is a discrepancy in the marks attributed.

### **1.7 Assessment processes are in place to establish a high degree of validity and robustness to support the decisions made and the outcome of assessments.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Assessment matrix
- b. Academic regulations
- c. Assessment handbooks
- d. Role of the external examiner
- e. External examiner reports
- f. Example assessments
- g. Reasonable adjustment policy
- h. Staff training for assessment development

Guidance:

Validity refers to the extent to which an assessment measures what it is intended to measure. AEIs need to have documents in place to show how the level of validity and robustness (reliability, fairness, and generalisability) is determined. This process will normally result in the production of a report or a number of documents confirming:

- how well the assessment contents align with the learning objectives;
- the process for designing new assessments including piloting or trialling;
- how training and standardisation of examiners, IQA staff and EEs is undertaken;
- any reviews or updates of the assessment method based on educational research, feedback from stakeholders and analysis of data;
- the data analysis or statistical methods used to analyse assessment data for reliability and validity. This could include item (question) difficulty, discrimination indices, and internal consistency of the assessment.
- the invigilation processes;
- the security processes in place to ensure that academic integrity is maintained; and,
- methods for setting the pass mark.

The process for setting the pass mark is up to the AEI but it needs to be defensible. Where a standard pass mark is in place for all assessments the AEI needs to have strategies in place to ensure that the pass mark genuinely reflects minimal competence in the subject matter. For example, where the pass mark for an examination is 40% there must be a mechanism for checking that candidates passing the examination have reached the safe or minimal level of competence in the subject matter.

### **1.8 Adjustments are provided in accordance with relevant equalities and human rights legislation for all assessments.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Equality, diversity, and inclusion policy
- b. Disability policy
- c. Health and wellbeing policy
- d. Appeals procedure
- e. Fitness to study policy
- f. Reasonable adjustment policy
- g. Mitigating circumstances policy
- h. Records of reasonable adjustment
- i. Candidate support plans
- j. Individual learning plans

Guidance:

This requirement looks at the evidence of reasonable adjustments applied for assessments undertaken within the education and clinical environment. It must be noted that candidates on these programmes are already registered veterinary nurses and will likely already be familiar with the adjustments they need. However, this may look slightly different in the education context, particularly if the candidate has not been enrolled on a programme of study for a period of time. The AEI must consider each request and adjustment individually, depending on the specific needs of the candidate.

### **1.9 The required facilities and resources are in place for the delivery and assessment of the curricula.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Campus map
- b. Consumables list
- c. Library resources
- d. IT resources
- e. Evidence of suitable and sufficient delivery areas
- f. Online learning platform

Guidance:

This requirement will need to be reflective of the planned delivery approaches covered in 1.5. This will have different connotations for programmes delivered exclusively online versus those with an in-person element. Nonetheless, all programmes must be able to offer candidates suitable online access to current evidence-based literature. Additionally, the assessment methodologies must be carefully considered in the context of the delivery model, particularly where assessments are undertaken remotely.



**1.10 Curricula and assessments are reviewed by an External Examiner who has sufficient standing credibility and a breadth of experience within the discipline.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. External examiner CV
- b. External examiner CPD records
- c. External examiner recruitment criteria
- d. External examiner reports

Guidance:

The value of the External Examiner cannot be underestimated, and each AEI will have its own recruitment criteria for this role. Whilst the RCVS requires this information, it does not confirm appointments or set limitations. The AEI must determine the individual with the most relevant expertise for its programmes, ideally with experience in the relevant subject matter. In order to accommodate this, AEIs may wish to utilise more than one external examiner, to ensure that the veterinary, pedagogical and subject matter considerations are all effectively covered. At this level, recruiting an external examiner who has undertaken specific training for this role may be beneficial.



## Educators and assessors

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

### Requirements

#### **2.1 Are appropriately qualified and experienced and always act as professional role models.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Staff CVs
- b. Staff CPD records
- c. Job descriptions
- d. Person specifications
- e. Guest speaker list

Guidance:

As discussed in Standard 1, this requirement does not mandate registration with the RCVS – the educators and assessors must be suitably qualified and experienced with regard to the programme they are developing, delivering, and assessing. This should also include evidence of relevant educational training and qualifications.

Awareness of current practice is a key element of this requirement, practice in this context referring to the industry area relevant to the CertAVN. For example, clinical related programmes should be developed, delivered, and assessed by educators who have clinical expertise in the specific area, such as anaesthesia, whereas a leadership related programme requires educators and assessors with expertise in leadership. This may include veterinary professionals, but for a non-clinical programme it is accepted that someone from outside of the industry may be better placed to offer this insight. It is important that the experience and qualifications of the educators and assessors match the programme, as opposed to those who are generally experienced in veterinary practice.

## **2.2 Receive relevant induction, ongoing support, education, and training.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Staff induction procedure
- b. CPD policy
- c. CPD records
- d. Mechanism for obtaining feedback
- e. Appraisal procedure
- f. Professional development plans
- g. Pedagogical training procedures
- h. Staff wellbeing mechanisms
- i. Mentoring processes
- j. Monitoring of teaching and learning
- k. Equality, diversity, and inclusion training processes

Guidance:

All educators and assessors must be effectively inducted, in order to undertake their roles safely and in accordance with their role requirements. Following the induction period, ongoing review and support should be provided, identifying areas for development, with training made available to facilitate the required progression.

Where the personnel are registered with the RCVS, this CPD is expected to be included within the ICPD platform.

## **2.3 Have supported time and resources to enable them to fulfil their roles in addition to other professional responsibilities.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. CPD policy
- b. Staff CVs
- c. Staff availability
- d. Teaching allocations
- e. Workload allocation model

Guidance:

All educators and assessors must be able to achieve the requirements of their role within the time allocation afforded within their contract, be that full time or part time. Educators and assessors should have time available for teaching, assessing, marking, tutorials, and other role requirements such as line management.



### **2.4 Receive and act upon constructive feedback from candidates and stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching, supervision and assessment, and a clear strategy for curriculum development.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Feedback policy
- b. Evaluation of academic practice
- c. Employer consultation
- d. External examiner reports
- e. Module reviews
- f. Stakeholder feedback
- g. Monitoring of teaching and learning

Guidance:

The implementation of changes following feedback allows an opportunity to demonstrate the continual improvement of provision. Nonetheless, it will not only be candidates providing feedback; information and data should also be sought from colleagues and wider stakeholders, including external examiners and employers. AElS may wish to consider annual employer meetings or regular consultation / employee engagement events in order to increase the feedback opportunities.

All feedback should be constructively considered and applied as appropriate. This requirement specifies that the improvements should demonstrate progression of teaching and assessment practice. It would be expected that these processes are fully considered and addressed as required. Nonetheless, it is appreciated that obtaining feedback presents its own challenges, thus demonstration of actively seeking feedback can contribute to the compliance for this requirement.

### **2.5 Appropriately share and use evidence of assessment outcomes to make decisions on candidate progression and programme completion.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Moderation reports
- b. External examiner reports
- c. Course design rationale
- d. Exam Boards

Guidance:

The progression process for candidates must be clear and objective, following the academic regulations, or similar, of the AEI. This process should follow the assessment procedures and include an auditable trail of decisions. This may include the Board of Examiners processes, which should clearly indicate who is involved in the decision-making process, such as the external examiner.

Subjective decisions on assessment or progression should be avoided by educators or assessors, unless this is a part of a recognised system for awarding marks for the assessment type being used. For instance, a subjective global score might be used in conjunction with an objective marking scheme for certain assessments. Evidence must be available to demonstrate the approach undertaken and how the subjective element supports the objective decision.

**2.6 Suitably experienced and qualified personnel use current best practice to quality assure curricula and assessments to promote quality improvement within the qualification(s).**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Job descriptions
- b. Person specifications
- c. Qualification development procedures
- d. Qualification scrutiny procedures
- e. Quality improvement plan
- f. Self-assessment reports
- g. Validation processes
- h. Course committee meetings
- i. Monitoring of teaching and learning

Guidance:

Ensuring the appropriate personnel are available within the teaching team or the wider institution is critical to the effective delivery of the programme; this requirement specifically mandates that there are assessment experts available to quality assure the curricula and assessments. Further, the expectation is that the relevant personnel are provided with the opportunity, and have the capability, to suggest ongoing improvements to both the curricula and assessment strategy.



# Learning culture

Education and training is valued and promoted in a safe and inclusive way, across all learning environments, with diversity, inclusion, and civility at the forefront. Programmes must also demonstrate a clear commitment to sustainability and promotion of the values of the *Code of Professional Conduct* at all times.

## Requirements

### 3.1 Prioritise the wellbeing of people.

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Staff inductions
- b. Staff reviews
- c. Nominated staff members for wellbeing
- d. Pastoral support
- e. Staff or candidate *Codes of Conduct*
- f. Wellbeing policy
- g. Wellbeing initiatives

- h. Peer reviews
- i. CPD records
- j. Risk assessments related to health and wellbeing
- k. Candidate engagement with wellbeing initiatives
- l. Reasonable adjustments policy and procedure
- m. Examples of reasonable adjustments
- n. Equality, diversity, and inclusion training processes

Guidance:

The importance of supporting and developing health and wellbeing cannot be underestimated; this requirement encourages the compassionate approach expected for everyone working in the veterinary and educational professions. A thorough assessment of needs for candidates and staff should be considered as routine.

AEIs are expected to demonstrate their commitment to wellbeing and the supportive services they can offer. Evidence of access to these resources is also required, which could include data from counselling or employee assistance programmes or be as simple as a flexi-working request to accommodate childcare requirements.

### **3.2 Ensure candidates and educators understand how to raise concerns or complaints and are encouraged and supported to do so in line with local and national policies without fear of adverse consequences.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Minutes of candidate meetings
- b. Minutes of candidate representative meetings
- c. Programme/qualification handbooks
- d. Induction policy and timetables for candidates and staff
- e. Complaints procedure
- f. Whistle blowing policy
- g. Social media policy
- h. Safeguarding policy
- i. Wellbeing policy
- j. Staff code of conduct
- k. Candidate code of conduct
- l. Malpractice/maladministration policy
- m. Bullying and harassment policy

Guidance:

This requirement, along with Requirements 3.3 and 3.4, demonstrates the process to be followed for concerns and complaints. Whilst it is hoped that this is not a regular occurrence, it would be highly unlikely for an AEI to never receive a concern or complaint, and thus redacted examples can be submitted.

This first step in the process is simply demonstrating the process for a complaint submission, which is accessible and clear. The AEI is required to ensure this process promotes civility and psychological safety.



### **3.3 Ensure any concerns or complaints are investigated and dealt with effectively, ensuring the wellbeing of people and animals is prioritised.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Complaints review board
- b. Complaints procedure
- c. AEI/delivery site fitness to practise policy
- d. Safeguarding policy
- e. Wellbeing policy
- f. Examples of complaints
- g. Malpractice/maladministration policy
- h. Whistleblowing policy
- i. Bullying and harassment policy

Guidance:

This is the second step in the process and should include a lot more detail regarding the application of the process.

This requirement mandates that concerns and complaints are fully and effectively addressed, in other words, they are not dismissed without investigation. However, it must also be clear that those who have submitted the complaint, as well as those who are the subject of the complaint, are treated fairly. Supportive mechanisms should be in place for everyone involved whilst the investigation is being conducted.

It is imperative, however, that animal welfare is never compromised; if a concern or complaint is submitted relating to candidate misconduct with regard to care of animals, for example, the AEI is expected to uphold a duty of care and take proactive steps at the earliest opportunity. As all candidates will be registered with the RCVS, or on a similar register in their home nation, the AEI must consider whether the regulatory concerns process needs to be initiated.

### **3.4 Ensure incidents are fully investigated and learning reflections and actions are recorded and disseminated.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Minutes of meetings
- b. Complaints procedure
- c. Disciplinary policy
- d. Risk assessment and policy reviews
- e. Accident records
- f. Evidence of outcomes/actions and dissemination
- g. Examples of incidents or complaints
- h. Continuing professional development plans and records
- i. Bullying and harassment policy

Guidance:

This final step in the process promotes the learning culture expected of AElS; everyone makes mistakes, but how that is dealt with and learnt from will have a significant impact on the future career of the individual involved.

It is expected that learning action points are instigated for those involved, with a clear commitment to improving their behaviour and aiming to prevent future mistakes. Incidents could include accidents, near-misses, breaches in confidentiality, uncivil behaviour, or academic misconduct; these examples are not an exhaustive list.

Some incidents, unfortunately, will be sufficiently serious to warrant withdrawal from the course or suspension of employment. In this scenario, it is still expected that learning actions are undertaken, to reduce the risk of the behaviour being repeated by other candidates or team members.

### **3.5 Promote candidate engagement with the *RCVS Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses* to develop open and honest practitioners, who work with integrity within the confines of veterinary legislation.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. AEl/delivery site fitness to practise procedure
- b. Candidate feedback
- c. Module/qualification handbook
- d. Monitoring of teaching and learning
- e. Learning logs
- f. Reflective diaries
- g. Tutor allocations
- h. Tutorial records
- i. Learner reviews
- j. Candidate handbook
- k. Employer feedback

Guidance:

As registered professionals, the *RCVS Codes of Professional Conduct* must be considered and reflected at all times. This requirement references both of the *Codes*, i.e. for veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons, in recognition of the different professionals who will be involved with the training of candidates and ensuring that everyone knows and understands what is expected of RCVS-regulated professionals.

Furthermore, examples for this requirement could include feedback from employers, demonstrating how candidates or teaching personnel embody the concepts of the *Codes*.

### **3.6 Promote evidenced-based improvement in education and veterinary nursing practice, developing practitioners who use this concept as a grounding principle in their daily work.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Research committee meetings
- b. Programme/qualification level intended learning outcomes
- c. Module/qualification handbooks
- d. CPD policy
- e. Secondment policy and examples
- f. Guest (expert) speaker timetables
- g. Journal clubs
- h. Clinical audits
- i. Clinical governance
- j. Quality improvement policies and procedures
- k. Inter-professional research opportunities

Guidance:

This requirement builds upon the concepts taught and assessed within the licence to practise training programmes. Thus, the expectation here is not to demonstrate evidence-based curriculum and assessment as the sole method of compliance, but rather how the candidates are developed in this area, encouraging the regular consideration of this important skill.

In order to fully demonstrate these concepts, it is expected that the evidence submission will also include examples of how the educators and assessors are developed in this area. This will help to develop their own knowledge and understanding, as well as improving their ability to promote and support candidates' development in this area.

### **3.7 Demonstrate a reasonable commitment to environmental sustainability, including consideration of the impact of delivering the programme on the environment.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Environment sustainability policy
- b. Waste disposal contracts
- c. Accreditation with external partners e.g. green credentials
- d. Sustainably sourced materials
- e. Evidence of internal teams/groups promoting environmental sustainability

Guidance:

Whilst this is not a new concept, it has not been explicitly mandated in the Standards before now. Therefore, as a new requirement, the expectation is for a reasonable consideration of sustainable approaches, which can be built upon in the coming years. Consideration of this important topic could be included in the curricula, aiming to inspire candidates to take a proactive approach in creating a sustainable future for the professions. Examples could include anaesthesia techniques, medication approaches, or surgical sterility procedures.

### 3.8 Provide constructive feedback throughout the programme to promote and encourage reflective learning.

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Feedback policy and procedures
- b. Feedback records
- c. Evidence-based professional practice procedures
- d. Module/qualification descriptors
- e. Programme/qualification handbook
- f. Assessment examples
- g. Formative assessment procedures
- h. Learner reviews
- i. Practice based supervisor, if applicable
- j. Work-based assessment practices, if applicable

Guidance:

Candidates must receive feedback throughout the duration of their programme. This will be comprised of formative and summative assessment feedback, which should also include examination outcomes, as well as more developmental processes such as tutorials.

Candidates are expected to reflect on their outcomes and address any learning actions which need to be considered.

### 3.9 Ensure that recruitment, selection, and retention of candidates is open, fair, and transparent, and includes measures to understand and address underrepresentation.

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Selection criteria for admission
- b. Recruitment documentation
- c. Copies of candidate certificates
- d. Accredited prior learning (APL) and recognised prior learning (RPL) policies
- e. Equality of opportunity policy
- f. Interview records
- g. Self-assessment reports
- h. Widening participation strategy and plan
- i. Application process
- j. Interview/selection process
- k. Reasonable adjustments policy and procedure
- l. Examples of reasonable adjustments
- m. Equality, diversity, and inclusion procedures

Guidance:

Promotion of equal, diverse, and inclusive approaches is an expectation of all veterinary nurse qualifications. This requirement considers this expectation in the context of candidate recruitment and how AELs are assured that recruitment, selection, and retention is fair.



This will include examples of recruitment processes, such as the interview process if utilised, with accessible options, as well as the follow up selection processes and how those are managed in a fair and inclusive way. The retention of candidates can be evidenced by consideration of how the AEI supports candidates with additional needs and thus promotes programme completion by potentially underrepresented groups.

### **3.10 Proactively identify and act on areas for improvement, effectively measuring programme performance and outcomes.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. External academic consultation
- b. Employer consultation
- c. Review of programme performance
- d. Module reviews
- e. Candidate intake figures
- f. Stakeholder feedback
- g. Candidate feedback
- h. Graduate outcomes data
- i. Alumni engagement and data

Guidance:

Further to requirement 2.4, this requirement is more data driven. Module and programme completion and outcomes data will provide a valuable opportunity for development, and each AEI is expected to review this data thoroughly, with clear processes in place for actioning changes and improvements. AEIs are encouraged to consider the data, as well as seeking the wider feedback that may generate the ongoing development that is expected and required in programmes of this nature.

### **3.11 Provide evidence that adequate market demand and finances are in place and are sufficient to sustain and develop the programme and have been approved by the AEI.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Budget
- b. Self-assessment reports
- c. Institution's annual report containing audited accounts
- d. Budgetary forecast for the programmes
- e. Evidence of actual and/or projected income sources
- f. Evidence of demand for the programme (market demand)
- g. Marketing strategy
- h. End of programme evaluation
- i. Justification for critical candidate numbers e.g. business planning documentation

Guidance:

This requirement should demonstrate that there is, or will be, sustainability of provision.

This covers the financial sustainability, for example, that the AEI can afford to run the programme, with all of the associated costs. This may be best evidenced by a profit and loss breakdown, clearly demonstrating income versus outgoings, and further planned developments.

Additionally, this requirement covers programme sustainability, such as a market demand for the programme with effective recruitment meeting the needs of the AEI. This should clearly reference a critical number / critical mass consideration demonstrating at which point the modelling becomes unsustainable and the programme would not be able to run. It is accepted that new programmes may make a financial loss in the first few years; the AEI is expected to acknowledge this and agree to the modelling.

**3.12 Where an accredited education institution plans to make any changes to its provision, including assessments, the RCVS must approve all changes prior to implementation.**

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Correspondence with RCVS regarding proposed changes
- b. Process for programme changes

Guidance:

Veterinary nurse qualifications are accredited by the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee and then ratified by Veterinary Nurses Council; should a change be made to the accredited programme it is no longer the programme that was reviewed and accredited by the Committee. Thus, all changes must be reported to the RCVS and then accepted by the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee before they can be implemented.

It is helpful for AEIs and delivery sites to have a standard process which is followed in this scenario, which should also consider other educational regulatory requirements and Competition and Markets Authority stipulations. Guidance can be provided by the RCVS as required.



## The accreditation process

35. The accreditation process and sequence of events is summarised in the following table:

<b>Stage 1</b>	University or Awarding Organisation contacts RCVS to confirm interest in delivering post-registration veterinary nursing programme(s)
<b>Stage 2</b>	The RCVS arranges an in-person support visit to the campus or headquarters
<b>Stage 3</b>	Submission of Notification of Intent to RCVS
<b>Stage 4</b>	The RCVS considers application and either <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requests further information and/or</li> <li>• Confirms acceptance of proposal and sets the date of the accreditation event</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 5</b>	Full course approval application submitted to RCVS a minimum of eight weeks prior to the planned accreditation event. Fee payment made in full.
<b>Stage 6</b>	Accreditation event
<b>Stage 7</b>	Accreditation report and status
<b>Stage 8</b>	Ongoing annual quality monitoring

### Initial Contact

36. For new providers, the first step is initiating contact with the RCVS. This will be the first indication that course development is being considered at the university or awarding organisation and will allow the RCVS to provide support from the outset.
37. For existing providers, the RCVS will contact each AEI when the routine re-accreditation process is due, in order to offer timely support.
38. The support visit is a mandatory undertaking for new programmes, but optional for existing provision. The VN Qualifications Lead and one of the Qualifications Assessors will attend in person, providing detailed guidance around application of the standards and the accreditation process. The costings for support visits are borne by the university or awarding organisation and can be found on the RCVS [Fees page](#).

### Notification of Intent

39. Notification of Intent is part of the initial process for gaining RCVS accreditation. It alerts the RCVS to your proposed provision and enables your full accreditation application and visit to be appropriately timed. The Notification of Intent document is available from the RCVS upon request; completion is required by new and existing providers.
40. It is important that you complete and return the Notification of Intent as soon as you begin the development process of a new course, or the substantial / periodic review of an existing provision.

**You should note that the Notification of Intent must be received by the RCVS at least twelve calendar months in advance of the proposed course review date.**

41. On receipt of your Notification of Intent, the RCVS will contact you in order to request any further supporting information, arrange a meeting to discuss the proposal and confirm the accreditation event date.

### Accreditation application

42. A full application for accreditation, along with all supporting documentation, must be received by The RCVS at least eight weeks prior to the planned accreditation event. The full fee payment is required by the date the application is submitted. Delay in submitting this documentation or paying the required fee may jeopardise the accreditation process and lead to cancellation of the visit.
43. Once a full application for accreditation has been received, via the online portal, the RCVS panel will commence review of the evidence. You may be contacted during this review period for further evidence prior to the accreditation visit. Please ensure that such information is provided promptly in order to support your application process.



### Accreditation status

44. Following the accreditation visit, any issues to be addressed will be discussed with you and a suitable action plan drawn up. Accreditation will depend upon the satisfactory resolution of any major issues of concern. If all of the appropriate modules, assessments, facilities, resources and support systems for the proposed programme(s) are in place, accreditation will be offered as set out below:
- **Full accreditation for 5 years** is given to programmes that meet, or exceed, all criteria for accreditation;
  - **Full accreditation for a shorter period** can be awarded if significant deficiencies are identified; accreditation will be subject to the deficiencies being addressed within a specific time period. The RCVS will normally undertake a full programme review before the end of the accreditation;
  - **Accreditation denied** in situations where the RCVS considers that deficiencies are so serious that they are unlikely to be rectifiable within a reasonable period of time;
  - **Terminal approval** may apply where the university or awarding organisation is unable to meet RCVS accreditation standards, or if they voluntarily close. The procedures for terminal accreditation must be followed.

### Ongoing monitoring and annual reporting

45. The RCVS requires a self-assessment report to be provided annually. It must provide detailed information about the recruitment, retention and outcomes of students both currently and in comparison with previous years. A format for the report will be provided.
46. The RCVS will conduct quality monitoring audits in relation to post-qualification courses as deemed necessary.

# Annex 1



