



Post Registration Framework for Veterinary Nursing

June 2022

RCVS | SETTING
VETERINARY
STANDARDS



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 students.
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 thorough understanding of key aspects of their field of practice, 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 their field of practice;
- 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 professional practice;
 - to describe and comment upon particular aspects in their professional area, 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 their area of professional practice).

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 veterinary colleagues and non-veterinary audiences, including clients.

And will have the qualities and transferable skills necessary for professional veterinary nursing work 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 thorough understanding of the knowledge base and a critical awareness of developments at the forefront of their area of professional practice;
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own area of practice;
- 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 their professional area;
- conceptual understanding that enables them to:
 - evaluate critically current literature and research in their professional area, and;
 - evaluate clinical methodologies and techniques, and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate to propose new approaches to professional practice.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- deal with complex issues in an organised and creative manner, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to veterinary colleagues and non-veterinary audiences, including clients;
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks in their professional area of work;
- 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 professional veterinary nursing work requiring:

- the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;
- decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts, 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 registerable 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 FHEQ Level 6 or SCQF Level 9. Although qualifications at higher academic levels can also be undertaken.
12. The focussed field of study within these qualifications must amount to a minimum of 40 credits of subject specific content, at Level 6 ●



Information for candidates

13. 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.

Eligibility rules for candidates

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

Qualification	Potential candidates must be an RVN; or be on a comparable register in the country within which they practise.
Experience	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.
Access to placement	During studies, candidates must be employed in, or have agreed access to placement in, a suitable professional environment, tailored to their area of focussed 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.
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 five years.

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 registerable 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 focussed field of study through an RCVS accredited university or awarding organisation.
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 focussed 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 (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 being at Level 6, in a focussed 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
 - Sustainability

Accreditation of educational institutions

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.

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Curriculum framework mapping
- b. Schemes of Work and Assessment Plans
- c. Curriculum documents
- d. Module descriptors
- e. Academic Handbook

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

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Schemes of Work and Assessment Plans
- b. Module descriptors
- c. Timetable
- d. Assessment schedules
- e. Assessment matrix
- f. Online platform

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. e. Module documents
- f. Assessment matrices

1.4 Curricula are developed and evaluated by suitably experienced and qualified educators and/or practitioners who are accountable for ensuring the curriculum incorporates relevant programme outcomes.

This may be evidenced through:

- a. CV and CPD records
- b. Academic Handbook
- c. Procedure for monitoring delivery and assessment
- d. Marking descriptors and rubrics

1.5 Curricula are structured and sequenced to enable students to manage their theory and practice learning experience effectively.

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

1.6 Moderation processes are in place.

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Assessment matrix
- b. Academic regulations
- c. Assessment Handbook
- d. Role of the External Examiner
- e. External Examiner report
- f. Example of assessments

1.7 Assessment and moderation is fair, reliable and valid.

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Academic regulations
- b. Assessment Handbook
- c. External Examiner report
- d. Schemes of work
- e. Module descriptors
- f. Internal Examiner and Assessor procedure
- g. Fitness to Practise policy

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

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Equality and Diversity Policy
- b. Disability Policy
- c. Health and Wellbeing Policy
- d. Appeals procedure
- e. Fitness to Practise Policy

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

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



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

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

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. VN staff availability and teaching hours

2.4 Receive and act upon constructive feedback from students and the people they engage with to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching, supervision and assessment.

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Feedback policy
- b. Evaluation of academic practice
- c. Employer consultation
- d. External Examiner report
- e. Module reviews

2.5 Appropriately share and use evidence to make decisions on student assessment and progression.

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Moderation reports
- b. External Examiner report
- c. Course design rationale



Sustainability

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

Requirements

3.1 Provide evidence that there is adequate market demand for the proposed qualification(s).

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Evidence of demand for the programme (the market)
- b. Marketing strategy for the programme

3.2 Clearly report finances and budget specific to the qualification leading to award of the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing.

This may be evidenced through:

- a. Course costing
- b. Financial statements
- c. Market research
- d. Business plan

3.3 Proactively identify and act on areas for improvement, regularly 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. Student intake figures

35. RCVS must be kept informed of proposed changes affecting the course provider's ability to meet the standards of accreditation. RCVS will retain the right to withdraw accreditation if it considers that such changes might jeopardise the integrity or standard of the qualifications.

The accreditation process

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

Stage 1	Submission of Notification of Intent to RCVS
Stage 2	RCVS considers application and either <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests further information or/and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arranges consultation site visit and confirms date of accreditation event
Stage 3	Full course approval application submitted to RCVS a minimum of six weeks prior to the planned accreditation event. Fee payment made in full
Stage 4	Accreditation event
Stage 5	Accreditation report and status
Stage 6	Ongoing annual quality monitoring

Notification of Intent

37. Notification of Intent is the first stage in gaining RCVS accreditation. It alerts RCVS to your proposed provision and enables your full accreditation application and visit to be appropriately timed. This can be found in Appendix 1.
38. 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 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 development date.

39. On receipt of your Notification of Intent, 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

40. A full application for accreditation, along with all supporting documentation, must be received by RCVS at least six 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.
41. Once a full application for accreditation has been received, RCVS may contact you for further information prior to the accreditation visit. Please ensure that such information is provided promptly in order to fully inform the RCVS visiting team.

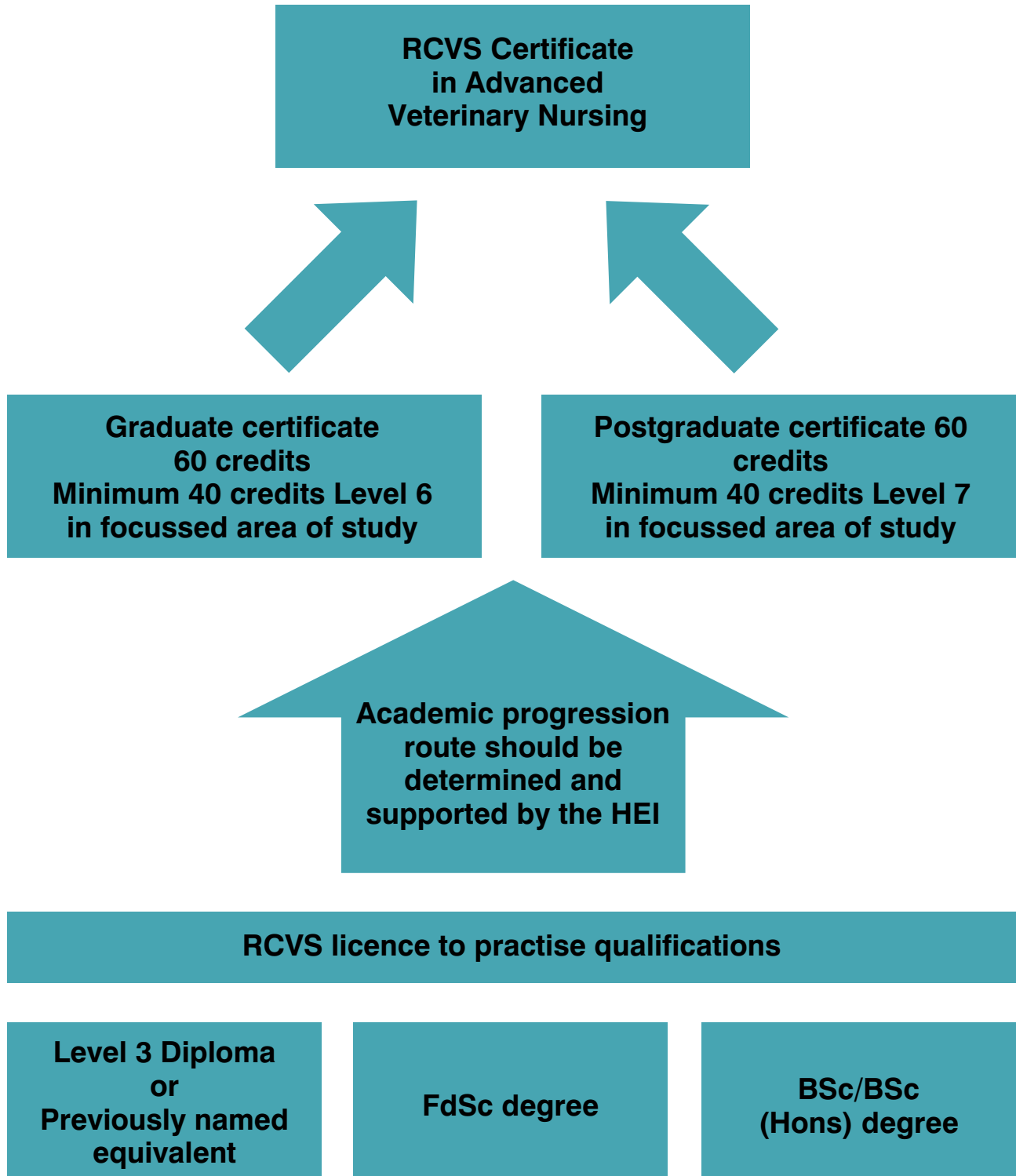
Accreditation status

42. 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 for 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.** If significant deficiencies are identified, accreditation will be subject to the deficiencies being addressed within a specific time period. RCVS will normally undertake a full programme review before the end of the accreditation;
 - **Accreditation denied** where 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

43. RCVS requires a self-monitoring report to be provided annually. This must list all non-compliances identified in the last RCVS visit report and any areas of weakness against the accreditation standards which you currently perceive. It must also 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.
44. RCVS will conduct quality monitoring audits in relation to post-qualification courses as deemed necessary ●

Annex 1



Appendix 1

Veterinary nurse education Notification of Intent

Veterinary Nursing Accreditation for the Delivery of RCVS Post-registration qualifications

Organisation and programme details Please provide details of your university or awarding organisation. The Programme Lead should be the individual to be contacted by the RCVS concerning your course development or the approval process.	
Name of organisation awarding the proposed qualification(s)	
Main address and contact details for the above organisation	
Name of Principal or Chief Executive Officer Please provide a contact email address	
Name of Programme Lead Please provide a contact email address	
Name of Quality Contact Please provide a contact email address	
Proposed programme(s) title	
Address and contact details of proposed site/s for delivery	

Market research	
<p>Perceived market Please append market research undertaken</p>	
<p>Evidence of need Further to the market research, please detail why there is a demand for the proposed programme</p>	
<p>Proposed intakes and student numbers per year Demonstrate how many intakes and student numbers would likely be enrolled per annum</p>	
<p>Programme design Please evidence the proposed delivery method, programme duration and append proposed theory units</p>	

Funding and sustainability	
<p>Funding arrangements for the proposed course(s) Please demonstrate the proposed costings and funding options available to students</p>	
<p>Staffing availability Please include delivery and quality assurance personnel, as well as plans for recruitment</p>	
<p>Facilities Please detail current situation and proposed improvements</p>	

Appendix 1

Development and accreditation plan
Please detail the proposed timetable for accreditation and identify key dates by which actions must be achieved

Notification of Intent	
On behalf of the organisation(s) detailed above, I seek to inform you of our intent to deliver a course of study leading to a RCVS recordable qualification in veterinary nursing.	
Signature of Principal/CEO	
Print name and official title	
Date	

