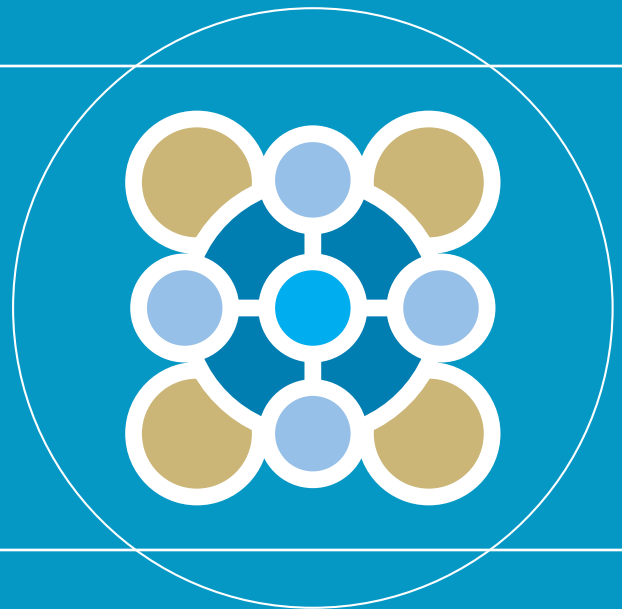
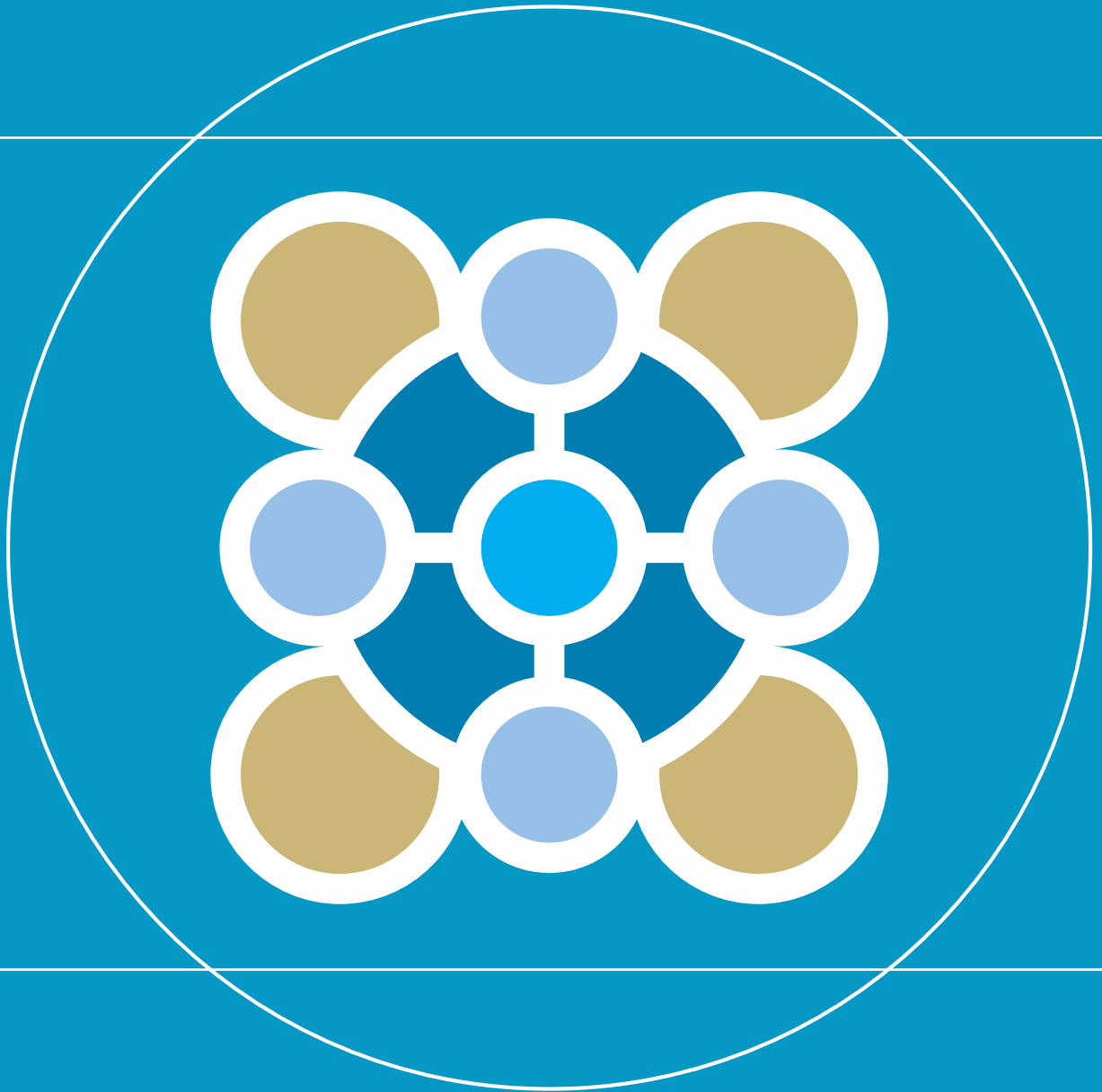


# The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

## Day One Competences

Edition Published 2022





## Introduction

---

The RCVS has a statutory duty to set and monitor the standards of veterinary degrees for registration into the profession. The “Day One Competences” describe the knowledge, skills and attributes required of veterinary students upon graduation to ensure that they are prepared for their first role in the profession and safe to practise independently.

Competence in a job has been defined as “the ability to perform the roles and tasks required by one’s job to the expected standard.” The standard of competence expected at any given time will vary with experience and responsibility, and it is recognised that the Day One Competences represent a graduate at the start of their career. Competence is therefore a relative term, both in terms of task and fluency in its execution, and increasing levels of competence will be expected throughout the professional’s career.

This version of the Day One Competences was updated and published in 2020 following a review which formed part of the Graduate Outcomes Project. The RCVS in particular wishes to acknowledge the work of the Day One Competences sub-group which, formed out of the main Graduate Outcomes Working Group, with individuals chosen based on their knowledge of professional education, and experience working as academics; practitioners; and in industry:

Professor Stephen May  
Miss Claire Wade  
Mr Adi Nell

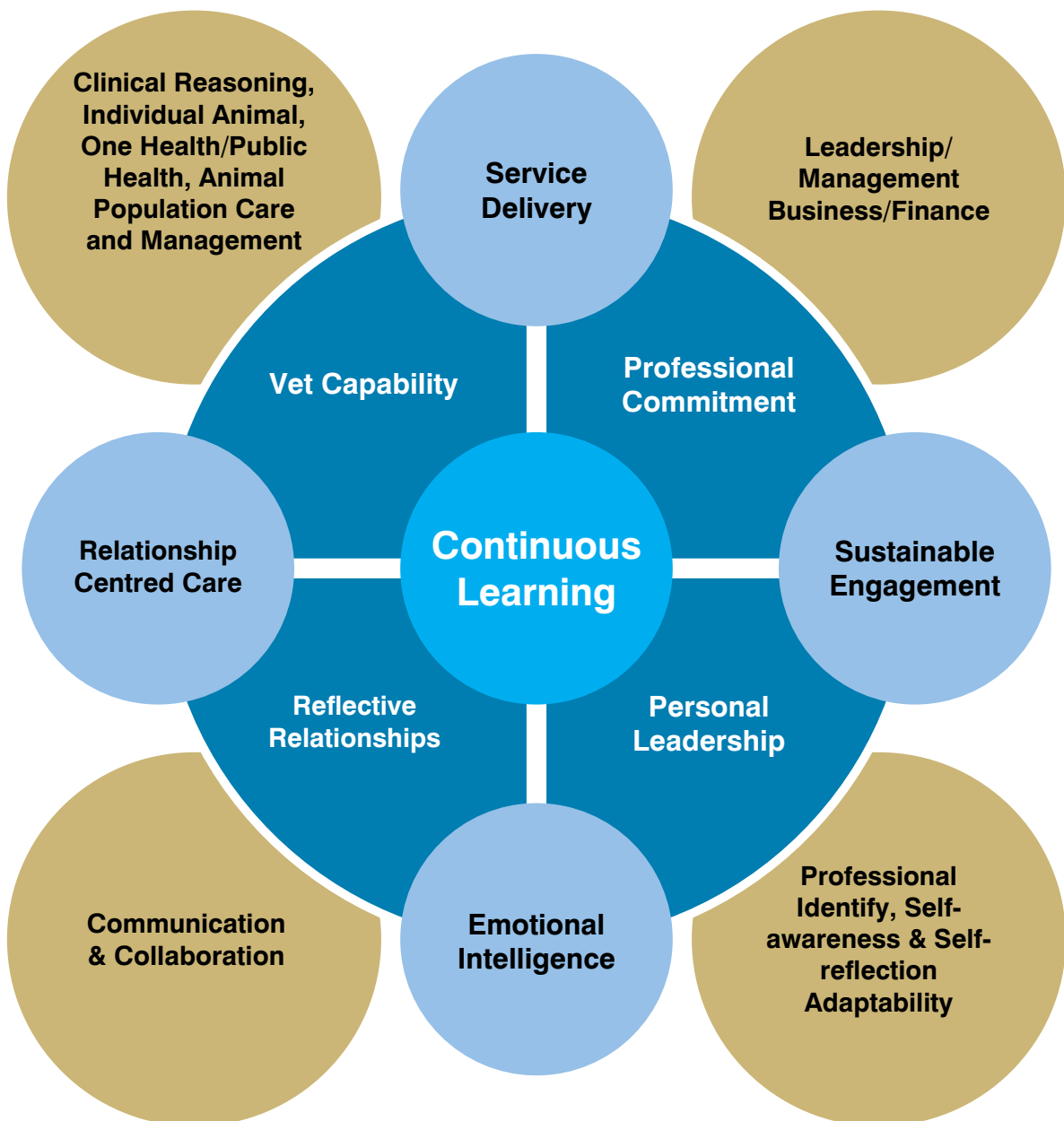
Mrs Gudrun Ravetz  
Professor Susan Rhind

The work of RCVS staff members Mr Duncan Ash and Dr Linda Prescott-Clements of the Education Department are also acknowledged for this update. The Education Department can be contacted at [education@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:education@rcvs.org.uk) for those who may wish to discuss this document further.

---

# Conceptual Model for the Day One Competences

Each competence is listed individually, and each one is part of a separate domain. However, the reality of professional practice is that competences are carried out holistically in an integrated manner, rather than as separate entities. The model below is designed to show the differing overarching areas and domains in which each veterinary surgeon will have displayed as being competent in upon graduation:



# Animal Welfare

Although not mentioned explicitly within the Model, “animal welfare” is implicit to the idea of a qualified veterinary surgeon, and is at the heart of each individual section of the Model and individual competence. It is at its essence, bigger than the Day One Competences and where each

competence is born from, and what each sets out to maintain. It is completely central to a veterinary surgeon in any veterinary duty that they perform from graduation and throughout their career. It is the core of veterinary medicine, and everything begins and ends with animal welfare.

---

# Continuous Learning

The Model itself is designed to be conceptual, showing how the different areas overlap or interact with each other. “Continuous learning” is considered to be at the heart of what it is to be a veterinary professional, framing every veterinary surgeon’s progression.

The four areas that link directly from this in the dark blue boxes are the domains, in which individual competences are described: Vet Capability; Professional Commitment; Reflective Relationships; and Personal Leadership. These are described in more detail within each section of the competences. The gold boxes are the sub-sets of these main domains.

Whilst specific competences are placed within the domains, the Model also shows how, although they are separate, they do interact. The Model should be considered as a framework which represents the competences as a whole, and how each domain will contribute to the development of a student and their professional identity as they become ready to graduate. The light blue boxes illustrate this, as whilst not “domains” in themselves, they form part of the philosophy and attributes of the professional veterinary surgeon, whilst also linking into the central idea of “continuous learning” that the Model is formed around.

# General Professional Skills and Attributes Expected of Newly Qualified Veterinary Surgeons - Personal Leadership

The competences within this domain describe the attributes and behaviours of a professional veterinary surgeon. Competences within this domain include knowing the Code of Conduct and understanding professional procedures, recognition of one's own abilities and limitations, and how to act and/or react to different situations and circumstances.

## Personal Leadership - Professionalism

1	Act professionally, as informed by the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct.	The RCVS Code of Professional Conduct is available on the RCVS website at <a href="http://www.rcvs.org.uk/vetcode">www.rcvs.org.uk/vetcode</a> . The Code sets out veterinary surgeons' professional responsibilities, and along with supporting guidance provides advice on the proper standards of professional practice.
2	Act in a way that shows understanding of ethical and legal responsibilities, appropriately balancing competing interests.	To abide by the principles in the Code of Professional Conduct, veterinary surgeons need to be able to make professional judgements based on sound principles. They must be able to think through the dilemmas they face when presented with conflicting priorities and be prepared to justify the decisions they make. As well as decisions relating to individual patients, animal groups, populations of animals and clients, veterinary surgeons must take account of the possible impact of their actions beyond the immediate workplace, for example, on public health, the environment and society more generally.
3	Demonstrate the ability to critically review and evaluate evidence, in support of practising evidence based veterinary medicine.	New graduates must be able to appreciate the difference in value to be attached to different sorts of literature, presentations and evidence, for example, recognising commercial and other forms of bias.
4	Apply principles of clinical governance.	More guidance on clinical governance is included in the supporting guidance to the Code of Professional Conduct. It includes critically analysing the best available evidence for procedures used, reflecting on performance and critical events and learning from the outcome to make changes to one's practice.
5	Contribute as appropriate to the advancement of veterinary knowledge, in order to improve the quality of animal care and public health.	The veterinary surgeon must think beyond the immediate case or work in hand, and take up opportunities to contribute to the processes of continuous improvement. This may include clinical audit, case discussions, research and adding to the evidence base for others to draw on in the future.
6	Apply the RCVS Ten Principles of Certification.	The Principles of Certification are described in the supporting guidance to the Code of Professional Conduct, available on the RCVS website. New graduates must be familiar with the Principles and follow the RCVS supporting guidance.

7	<b>Prescribe and dispense medicines correctly and responsibly in accordance with legislation and latest guidance including published sheets.</b>	New graduates must understand the requirements of the “Cascade” in prescribing. In particular, when prescribing or using antimicrobial agents, care must be taken to minimise the risk of antimicrobial resistance, risks to food safety, and risks to the person dispensing or damage to the environment.
8	<b>Report suspected adverse reactions effectively.</b>	The veterinary surgeon should follow the Veterinary Medicines Directorate procedures for reporting.

## Personal Leadership - Self-awareness & Self-Reflection

9	<b>Demonstrate situational awareness through navigating, responding and reflecting on the economic and emotional context in which the veterinary surgeon operates.</b>	Veterinary surgeons need to be resilient and confident in their own professional judgements to withstand the stresses and conflicting demands they may face in the workplace. They should know how to recognise the signs of excessive anxiety which may lead to stress and how to seek or give support to mitigate this in themselves and others.
10	<b>Demonstrate self-awareness of personal and professional limits, and know when to seek professional advice, assistance and support.</b>	Veterinary surgeons should at all stages in their careers be competent in their performance, or be under the appropriate supervision of those so competent until such time as they can act alone.
11	<b>Demonstrate a commitment to learning and professional development, including recording and reflecting on professional experience and other learning aimed at improving performance and competence.</b>	It is a requirement of the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct that veterinary surgeons must maintain and develop their knowledge and skills relevant to their professional practice and competence. This includes being able to reflect, learn, and share information gained with others. New graduates must be prepared to take part in the RCVS Veterinary Graduate Development Programme (VetGDP) and be ready on graduation to make the transition to being an independent learner responsible for their own professional improvement and development.
12	<b>Engage with self-audit and peer-group review processes in order to improve performance.</b>	Veterinary surgeons must regularly review how they are performing in their day to day professional work, and play an active part in performance appraisal. New graduates in clinical practice must take part in the RCVS Veterinary Graduate Development Programme and keep a record of their continuing progress until they have met the year one competence level.

## Personal Leadership - Adaptability

13	<b>Demonstrate ability to manage in situations where information is incomplete, deal with contingencies, and adapt to change.</b>	Veterinary surgeons must be able to manage cases and make decisions where there is incomplete or unclear data. For example, it is not always possible to run a full set of tests or range of diagnostic procedures which may preclude the investigation of the 'perfect' case. They need to be able to adapt their approach to fit changing circumstances, know how to cope appropriately when either making other plans or adapting to contingencies and the unexpected, and identify appropriate options for further diagnosis, treatment and/or referral, should a case require it.
14	<b>Adapt knowledge and skills to varied scenarios and contexts.</b>	Knowledge may sometimes be extrapolated to novel species and/or situations, and new graduates should be able to adjust existing protocol when standard measures are unavailable.





Professional  
Commitment

Leadership/  
Management  
Business/Finance

## Professional Commitment

The competences in this domain, as the name suggests, describe a graduate's professional capabilities around the business aspects of veterinary practise. Competences in this domain recognise that graduates are not expected to have full knowledge of how to run a successful business, but that they should be aware of the way the profession operates, both in terms of businesses that exist within the profession and also outside the profession in related areas.

### Professional Commitment - Business/Finance

15

Demonstrate a basic knowledge of the organisation, management and legislation related to a veterinary business.

This includes knowing one's own and the employer's responsibilities in relation to employment, financial and health and safety legislation, and the position relating to non-veterinary staff, professional and public liability. Also one would need to be aware of how fees are calculated, of income, overheads and other expenditure involved in running a veterinary business. It also requires an ability to work with various information systems in order to effectively communicate, share, collect, manipulate and analyse information. Finally, it is also important to comply with professional standards, protocols and policies of the business knowledge of legislation affecting veterinary businesses, such as the disposal of clinical waste and safety of medicines.

### Professional Commitment - Leadership/Management

16

Promote health and safety of patients, clients and colleagues in the veterinary setting, including applying the principles of risk management to practice.

This includes knowledge and explanation of the procedure for reporting adverse incidents and the procedures for avoiding them. It also includes following safe practices relating to the dangers in the workplace.

# Reflective Relationships

Professional relationships form an important part of a veterinary surgeon's career, from working directly with colleagues within the same institutions, to those based in other locations and/or areas of the profession and relationships with clients. Therefore, understanding how to communicate and collaborate effectively is key for the competences within this domain, as they are central to forming and maintaining the relationships that will exist within a veterinary surgeon's professional life.

## Reflective Relationships – Collaboration & Communication

17	Communicate effectively with clients, the public, professional colleagues and responsible authorities, using language appropriate to the audience concerned.	Effective communication includes active listening and responding appropriately, both verbally and non-verbally, depending on the context.
18	Demonstrate inclusivity and cultural competence, and encourage diverse contributions within the workplace.	Cultural competence is the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people from all cultures. The veterinary profession is diverse, and veterinary surgeons will need to act professionally and show a respect for colleagues from all backgrounds.
19	Work effectively as a member of a professional/ inter-professional team, fully recognising the contribution of each professional, and demonstrate an understanding of cognitive diversity.	The team may include veterinary nurses, practice managers, technicians, farriers, nutritionists, physiotherapists, veterinary specialists, meat hygiene inspectors, animal handlers and others. The veterinary surgeon should be familiar with and respect the roles played by others in the team and be prepared to provide effective leadership when appropriate, and contribute to the synthesis that ensures that team outputs are always optimal.
20	Prepare accurate professional records and case reports, in a form appropriate to relevant audiences.	Patient records should be clear enough that they can be referred to by others and (if written by hand) legible, avoiding idiosyncratic abbreviations or jargon, so that the case can be taken over by another professional for ongoing treatment if necessary. If for a client and/or member of the public, records should be written in plain English and free from jargon.
21	Communicate clearly and collaborate with referral, diagnostic and other professional services.	This includes passing on all relevant information, including providing an appropriate history and other details.

# Practical and Clinical Competences Expected of Newly Qualified Veterinary Surgeons - Vet Capability

This domain describes the clinical competences, and encompasses the practical skills, techniques and underlying veterinary scientific knowledge that veterinary surgeons must possess upon graduation. By meeting these competences, graduates demonstrate that they are ready to carry out clinical procedures independently (to a day one competence standard). The majority of the competences lie within this domain.

## Vet Capability - Clinical Reasoning

22	Obtain an accurate and relevant history of the individual animal or animal group, and its/their husbandry and environment.	This will depend on context and, in particular, how extensive this is, including husbandry and environment. It will be affected by whether it is a first opinion or referred case and any proposed treatment. Also the nature of the case and what species, and whether a herd or individual and whether there is a disease profile or risk.
23	Develop appropriate treatment plans and administer treatment in the interests of the patient and with regard to the resources available and appropriate public health and environmental considerations.	This is centred around informed consent. It includes being able to tailor a treatment plan when there may be financial or other constraints. Veterinary surgeons must be mindful of the welfare of the patient(s), whether for an individual animal or the group, for example, anti-microbial resistance or appropriateness of treating animals with zoonosis.
24	Synthesises and prioritises problems to arrive at differential diagnoses.	New graduates should be able to identify different problems, creating refined problem lists to prioritise differential diagnoses.
25	Prioritise situational urgency and allocate resources.	New graduates will need to be able to triage cases to address the most urgent and important problems first, recognising emerging situations and directing action. They should also recognise and respond to notifiable, reportable, transboundary, epizootic and emerging/re-emerging diseases.
26	Act professionally in complex situations.	This could be situations where there is ambiguity and/or uncertainty, where there may be no clear diagnoses.

## Vet Capability – Individual Animal

27	Handle and restrain animal patients safely and humanely, and instruct others in helping the veterinary surgeon perform these techniques.	Safety applies not only to the animal, but also to yourself and others nearby. The newly qualified veterinary surgeon should be able to make a timely risk assessment of all procedures as duties are performed, as dangers may arise in situations that initially appear to be safe. They should be prepared to take a range of measures including adaptation, seeking assistance or retreating from the task until safety measures can be put in place.
28	Perform simple, elective surgeries in an aseptic fashion.	The new graduate must appreciate the requirement for asepsis during procedures, and be able to perform simple, elective surgeries within the limitations of their experience, in an aseptic fashion.
29	Perform a complete clinical examination relevant to presentation and context.	Whilst the newly qualified veterinary surgeon should be competent to perform a complete examination, they should know when it is appropriate to adapt their examination to the circumstances.
30	Attend all species in an emergency and perform first aid.	The new graduate must be willing to perform basic first aid, and know when and how to request assistance from others if called to deal with an animal outside their immediate area of competence or where there are potential risks to health and safety. This involves being able to make a rapid risk assessment of the situation and take appropriate action to protect the health and safety of themselves and those around them.
31	Collect, preserve and transport samples, select appropriate diagnostic tests, interpret and understand the limitations of the test results.	New graduates are expected to have a working knowledge of relevant tests for the condition under investigation. They should seek assistance to interpret results when appropriate, and recognise the way these tests perform in primary care and hospital based contexts.

32	<p><b>Use diagnostic techniques and use basic imaging equipment and carry out an examination effectively as appropriate to the case.</b></p>	<p>This competence includes taking images of diagnostically-useful quality, as well as the safe use of equipment (e.g. ionising radiation regulations) in accordance with best practice ('ALARA' principle – as low as reasonably achievable, and where possible with no exposure). Basic equipment includes, for example, x-ray and ultrasound, but a new graduate would not be expected to use endoscopes or perform an MRI or CT scan. New graduates should be able to interpret common findings and know when to refer or seek more experienced interpretation if appropriate. Veterinary surgeons should act in accordance with good health and safety practice and current regulations.</p>
33	<p><b>Safely perform sedation, and general and regional anaesthesia; implement chemical methods of restraint.</b></p>	
34	<p><b>Assess and manage pain.</b></p>	<p>The new graduate should be able to score, evaluate and treat pain.</p>
35	<p><b>Recognise when euthanasia is appropriate and perform it humanely.</b></p>	<p>Euthanasia should be carried out using an appropriate method, whilst showing sensitivity to the feelings of owners and others, with due regard to the safety of those present; it may include advice on disposal of the carcass.</p>
36	<p><b>Perform a systematic gross post-mortem examination, record observations</b></p>	<p>The new graduate should be aware of the limitations of such investigations, and the potential for conflict of interest where they have previously been involved with the case. It is important that they are able to differentiate between normal and abnormal, and that good quality records are kept, as well as samples for further investigation by a pathologist if necessary.</p>

## Vet Capability - Animal Population Care and Management

37	Assess the physical condition, welfare and nutritional status of an animal or group of animals and advise the client on good practice of husbandry and feeding.	This applies to commonly presented cases and does not include advanced advice for complex cases.
38	Recognise suspicious signs of possible notifiable, reportable and zoonotic diseases and take appropriate action, including notifying the relevant authorities.	This applies to all areas of veterinary practice. All veterinary surgeons must maintain high standards of biosecurity at all times in order to minimise the risk of contamination, cross-infection and accumulation of pathogens in the veterinary premises and in the field. It involves identifying the clinical signs, clinical course and transmission potential (including vectors) of pathogens associated with common zoonotic-, food-borne-, and transboundary animal diseases.
39	Apply population principles in compliance with legal regulations and economic realities.	New graduates should be able to recommend disease prevention measures; advise on nutritional management; recommend housing and husbandry protocols; and design therapeutic plans for disease management.
40	Recommend and evaluate protocols for biosecurity, and apply principles of biosecurity correctly, including sterilisation of equipment and disinfection of clothing.	New graduates should be able to develop bespoke biosecurity protocols tailored to the situation, covering isolation, disinfection, animal and people movement, and waste disposal.
41	Advise stakeholders on practices that promote animal welfare	New graduates should be advocates for animal welfare through communication of the physical, affective and natural needs of an animal. They should be able to explain ethical and welfare-related aspects of production processes and slaughter, and recognise proper handling and/or adequate production facilities by interpretation of appropriate animal behaviours and advise on animal husbandry and transport.

## Vet Capability – One Health/Public Health

42	Perform ante-mortem inspection of animals destined for the food-chain, including paying attention to welfare aspects; correctly identify conditions affecting the quality and safety of products of animal origin, to exclude those animals whose condition means their products are unsuitable for the food-chain.	Not all graduates will work in food-animal practice, but the ability to undertake a health and welfare assessment is an important competence. It is required of all new graduates in order to comply with European and OIE international recognition requirements. Further postgraduate training will be needed before the new graduate can take up official veterinarian duties.
43	Advise on, and implement, preventative programmes appropriate to the species and in line with accepted animal health, welfare and public health and environmental standards.	New graduates will need to be able to assess health and welfare records (and production records where appropriate) and implement health plans. This does not only apply to production animals but is important for any kept animals, particularly those kept in groups.
44	Promote the health and safety of people and the environment.	New graduates should be able to make recommendations for management of animal waste, carcasses and by-products and implement safety and infection control practices. They should also be able to advise on disaster/emergency preparedness and response, whilst practising responsible use of antimicrobial agents and describe the role of the veterinary profession in food safety.
45	Understand the principles and practice of the application of veterinary science to ensure food safety standards throughout the production chain, including performance of post-mortem inspection of food producing animals.	New graduates should also have experience of post-mortem inspection, as well as ante-mortem.

