

Introducing our new VN Educator Conference

A unique opportunity for ideas and collaboration



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Introducing our new VN Educator Conference

A unique opportunity for ideas and collaboration



This year, we are delighted to invite all veterinary nurse educators to our **RCVS VN Educator Conference 2025** – two dedicated events designed specifically for those involved in the education, training, and development of veterinary nurses.

The conference has been developed as a direct response to feedback from VN educators during last year's RCVS VN educator meetings. At these events they consistently told us they wanted more time to focus on the key issues facing VN education today, as well as greater opportunities to collaborate and share ideas with fellow educators from across the UK. We created this new conference structure in response to that call — making them larger events specifically designed by educators, for educators.

In this first year of the conference, there will be two opportunities to attend. The first will be taking place at Myerscough College on Tuesday 17 June 2025, and the second at our new RCVS offices in London on Wednesday 29 October 2025. Both events will feature a largely consistent programme, with most of the same speakers and sessions. However,

there may be some minor changes and enhancements following feedback from attendees at the first event, ensuring the second conference benefits from real-time reflections and improvements.

Focus on wellbeing and support

This year's conference theme, 'Wellbeing and support: creating inclusive and sustainable learning environments', reflects the growing need to embed wellbeing and inclusivity at the heart of VN education. Sessions will explore practical approaches to supporting students' mental health and resilience, alongside strategies for creating truly inclusive learning environments that meet the needs of students with disabilities, additional needs, and those who are neurodivergent.

“The conference will offer a balanced programme, ensuring educators leave with tools and insights to enhance both the theoretical and practical aspects of VN training.”

Practical and theoretical development

The conference will offer a balanced programme, ensuring educators leave with tools and insights to enhance both the theoretical and practical aspects of VN training. From innovative teaching methods, to supporting students in the workplace, sessions will address the real challenges educators face, with practical takeaways that can be applied directly to teaching.

Time to network and collaborate

We know that one of the most valuable aspects of any educator event is the chance to connect with others who share your experiences and challenges. With this in mind,

the conference has been carefully structured to maximise opportunities for networking and peer discussion. Dedicated networking breaks and interactive discussion sessions will give you time to build connections, share ideas and collaborate on solutions to some of the most pressing issues in VN education today.

Be part of shaping VN Education

The RCVS VN Educator Conference 2025 is an important step in our ongoing commitment to

supporting and developing the VN educator community. We know that high-quality education and training relies on skilled, supported, and well-connected educators, and this conference is designed to help achieve exactly that.

Bookings for the first conference at Myerscough will be opening shortly, so do keep an eye on your inboxes for your invitation. We look forward to welcoming you and working together to shape the future of VN education.

Review of veterinary nurse apprenticeship making good progress

Working together to ensure better levels of VN apprenticeship training

A trailblazer working group of expert employers is making excellent progress with its comprehensive review of the veterinary nurse apprenticeship programme.

This follows the successful work completed last year, which realised an increase in the maximum funding band for the current version of the apprenticeship from £15,000 to £17,000.

“I would like to thank all the employers, training providers and end point assessment providers who have been working hard on this review.”

The group is leading the review with support from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). It includes representatives from a range of employers, training providers and end point assessment organisations and is supported by the RCVS.

Joanna Moonan, Deputy Director for People Services at IfATE said: “I would like to thank all the employers, training providers and end point assessment providers who have been working hard on this review. Excellent progress

is being made towards our common goal, shared by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, of ensuring better than ever levels of apprenticeship training for veterinary nurses.”

The review has involved aligning the current RCVS Day One Competences for veterinary nurses to the occupational standard, which guides what knowledge, skills and behaviours must be learned for the apprenticeship. It is now considering end point assessment requirements and funding.

The group appreciates the support from RCVS and would like to particularly encourage smaller employers to join discussions and contribute to the review. Meetings are held online to ensure broad stakeholder participation.

For further information or to join the group, please email **Agri.Environment.ANIMAL@education.gov.uk**.



IfATE

Shaping skills training

Strengthening accreditation standards for transferring delivery sites

Enhancing oversight in veterinary nursing delivery site transfers

In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in veterinary nursing delivery sites transferring between awarding organisations (AOs). While such moves are not unusual, some AOs have raised concerns that certain delivery sites may be transferring to avoid sanctions imposed by their existing AO. This poses a potential risk to quality and standards, particularly if the new AO is unaware of any ongoing issues.

Further to this, AOs have highlighted to us that they have limited means of identifying such risks during the delivery site approval process. In response, we sought advice from our RCVS Governance Manager, as well as our Head of Legal Services (Standards), to explore how the RCVS could better support AOs in managing these transfers.

“RCVS Veterinary Nurses Council has agreed to introduce a new requirement within Standard 2 of the RCVS Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training.”

Discussions carefully considered data protection requirements, confidentiality, and the type of information the RCVS holds. In addition, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) was consulted to establish whether its General Conditions of Recognition would cover the necessary level of detail. While Ofqual's conditions do touch on some aspects, they do not always provide the full context AOs may require to make informed decisions.

With the above in mind, RCVS Veterinary Nurses Council has agreed to introduce a new requirement within Standard 2 of the RCVS Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training.

This new requirement, developed in consultation with the RCVS Governance and Legal teams, and following feedback from AOs reads:

2.17 Where a delivery site chooses to transfer accredited education institution (AEI), there must be effective communication between the AEIs regarding the risk status of the delivery site, to include any sanctions that may be in place, or any specific areas of concern.

This may be evidenced through:

- 2.17a. Communication examples relating to transferring delivery sites.
- 2.17b. Communication examples of changing partnership agreements.
- 2.17c. Student transfer planning and processes.
- 2.17d. Memoranda of Understanding.

Guidance:

This will apply to both higher education institutions (HEIs) and AOs, ensuring consistency across all educational providers. In practice, this will be reflected in partnership agreements for HEIs and in the approval processes for delivery sites transferring between AOs. AOs will also need to ensure compliance with Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition, particularly around malpractice and maladministration.

By introducing this requirement, we believe the approval process for transferring delivery sites will become clearer and more robust, ultimately protecting the quality of veterinary nurse education and training.

Compliance with this new requirement will be mandated from September 2025, to allow AEIs time to consider their approaches and evidence requirements.

Please note that AEI is the collective term used to refer to both AOs and universities.

An update on the CertAVN consultation

Review of responses now underway

Back in January, we launched a consultation on updates to our Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (CertAVN) framework, as part of a regular review process to ensure it remains up to date. It ran for a total of six weeks, closing on Monday 3 March 2025.

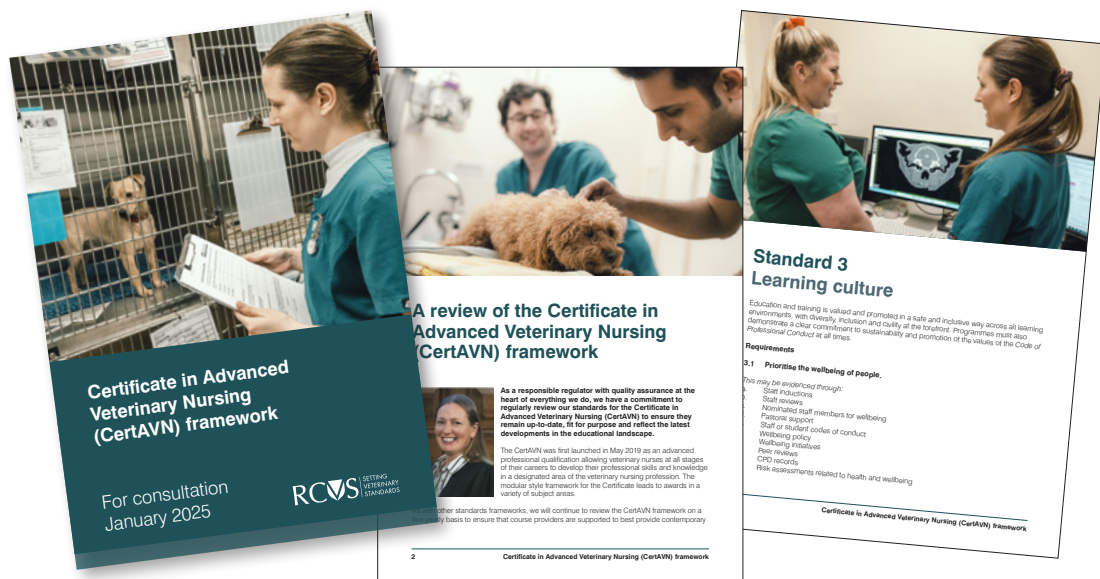
The CertAVN was launched in May 2019 as an advanced professional qualification allowing veterinary nurses at all stages of their careers to develop their professional skills and knowledge in designated areas of the veterinary nursing profession. The modular style framework for the certificate leads to awards in a variety of subject areas.

The CertAVN framework sets out the professional values, skills and behaviours required of the higher education institutions responsible for providing the training and support for CertAVN students. A key change proposed in the new framework is the introduction of a new standard covering learning culture, which encompasses the previous sustainability standard.

In response to the consultation, we received a total of 183 responses. These have been overwhelmingly positive, and the new standard has been very well received. Additionally, we have received some excellent suggestions for minor tweaks to help us ensure that each part of the framework is as clear as possible and really promotes the concept of the CertAVN qualification, as well as suggestions for additional examples for evidence to help accredited education institutions (AEIs) with compliance.

“We have received some excellent suggestions for minor tweaks to help us ensure that each part of the framework is as clear as possible.”

The working group must now review and agree to the changes made as a result of the consultation. The proposal for the updated framework will go to Veterinary Nurse Education Committee in April, before going to Veterinary Nurses Council for final approval in May.



Reasonable adjustments guide coming soon

Creating an inclusive learning environment for all

The RCVS and RCVS Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) have recently launched their 'Let's talk adjustments' campaign. The campaign aims to raise awareness and empower everyone in veterinary workplaces, no matter their role, disability or health condition, to have important conversations about reasonable adjustments.

In parallel with this work, the VN Team has been developing a guide for veterinary nurse education and training providers, their students, and staff on supporting veterinary nursing students and applicants who may require reasonable adjustments due to physical disabilities, mental health conditions, learning difficulties, or neurodevelopmental conditions.

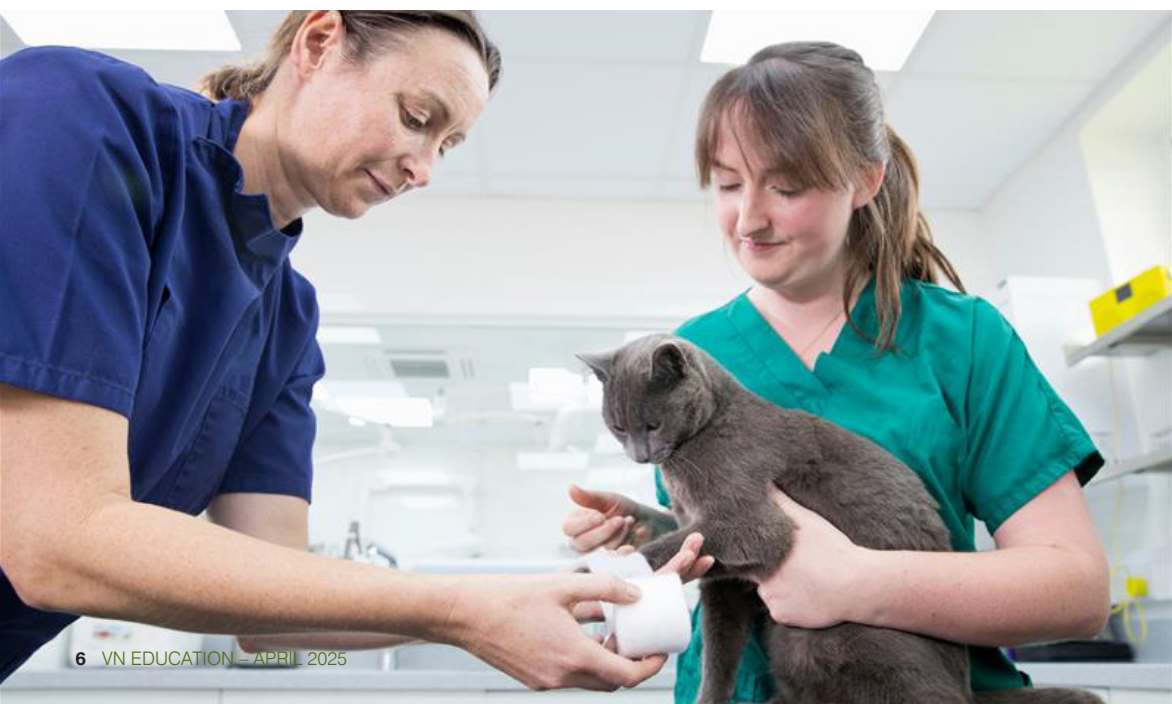
The guidance, which will be made available on the RCVS website, considers the requirements of both the Equality Act 2010 (covering England, Scotland, and Wales) and the Disability

Discrimination Act 1995 for Northern Ireland. Both sets of legislation include sections on reasonable adjustments in education.

The guidance distinguishes between reasonable adjustments related to competence standards and those related to assessment methods.

A competence standard pertains to the learning or assessment outcome being evaluated. For example, if a candidate is assessed on their knowledge of handling, restraining, and moving animals, reasonable adjustments may be applied to the assessment or its method. However, if the assessment evaluates the student's ability to handle, restrain, and move animals, this is a competence standard, and the student must demonstrate competency in this activity.

It should be noted that students may use tools and equipment to aid in demonstrating competency. For instance, if a competence



standard requires a student to restrain a patient, the student must perform the required action. The provider cannot alter the assessment to eliminate the need for the action - it would not be acceptable to allow the student to explain or write an essay on how they would restrain the patient, as this would change the requirement of the competence standard. However, providing additional time or resources to perform the task might be a reasonable adjustment to demonstrate meeting the standard.

The guidance highlights the use of assistive technology in both educational settings and

clinical practice. It also provides examples of reasonable adjustments for different RCVS Day One Skills. While the list is not exhaustive, it is useful to consider.

Once the guidance has been published, we encourage providers to take time to consider the reasonable adjustments they currently have available and how these relate to the guidance.

Students are encouraged to discuss reasonable adjustments with their education and training provider as soon as possible, to allow time to consider the appropriateness of the adjustment.

Nursing Progress Log review

Collaborative development for a modernised platform

The Nursing Progress Log (NPL) has served as the Day One Skills logging platform for many student veterinary nurses (SVNs) since 2010. It allows SVNs to record their progress towards competence, with supportive feedback and regular reviews provided by their clinical supervisors.

In 2023, the RCVS purchased the platform from the external e-portfolio provider, Skillwise, to allow us to develop the platform in-house, including updating the user interface and incorporating important feedback gathered over recent years.

“We are grateful to everyone who has contributed feedback so far and we look forward to continuing to work with the working group and student representatives.”

The RCVS Development Team is working closely with members of the VN Team throughout the development process. These collaborative meetings ensure the Development Team fully understand the specific updates requested, the rationale behind them, and the overall context and purpose of the platform.

Development is well underway, with a dedicated working group established to provide external input. This group includes stakeholders from across veterinary nursing education, ensuring all key user perspectives are represented. The working group will meet at three key stages in the coming months, providing feedback and comments that the Development Team can review and incorporate into the system on an ongoing basis.

Later this year, a small pilot group will support beta-testing. This group will consist of the working group and student representatives from the RCVS accreditation panels and SVNs who sit on the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee. Their input will ensure that the perspective of all end-users is fully considered, alongside a solid understanding of the RCVS requirements and context.

This development project aims to modernise the NPL and ensure it reflects contemporary training techniques and the evolving needs of SVNs, clinical supervisors, and AEIs. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed feedback so far, and we look forward to continuing to work with the working group and student representatives to deliver a platform that meets the needs of today's veterinary nursing students.

RCVS Academy celebrates VN awareness month

Supporting the progression of veterinary nurses

In celebration of Veterinary Nursing (VN) Awareness Month, the **RCVS Academy** (our free, online digital learning platform), is shining a spotlight on the incredible contributions of veterinary nurses and their vital role in the veterinary sector. This month offers a wonderful opportunity to recognise the hard work, dedication, and passion that veterinary nurses bring to the professions while also providing support and guidance to help them progress and thrive in their careers.

For those who thrive in an interactive learning environment, the Academy's new Academy Live sessions offer a unique opportunity to engage in real-time discussions with experts and fellow professionals. To mark VN Awareness Month, the Academy is hosting a series of upcoming live sessions, including topics such as professional development, maximising the registered veterinary nurse (RVN) role, and guidance on the roles and responsibilities of clinical supervisors. These sessions will not only enhance professional

knowledge but also foster networking and collaborative learning within the veterinary nursing community. **Details of these sessions are available on the RCVS events page.**

“Through a variety of engaging and relevant courses, nurses can enhance their skills in areas such as RCVS CPD requirements, mentorship, and leadership.”

The RCVS Academy has plenty to offer both student veterinary nurses (SVNs) and RVNs, with tailored content to support their professional journey at every stage. Courses such as ‘SVN: RCVS & me’ helps students navigate their professional responsibilities and build a strong relationship with the RCVS, while ‘RVN starting out’ offers essential guidance to newly registered nurses, easing their transition into their professional roles.

For veterinary nurses who are internationally qualified or returning to the field after a break,



the Academy offers specialised resources like 'VN pre-registration examination support' and 'Working in the UK for veterinary nurses'. These courses help overseas-qualified nurses register and integrate into the UK veterinary community, while the 'Nurse return' course ensures a smooth transition back into clinical practice for those re-entering the workforce.

The Academy recognises the importance of continuing professional development (CPD) for veterinary nurses at every stage of their career. Through a variety of engaging and relevant courses, nurses can enhance their skills in areas such as RCVS CPD requirements, mentorship, and leadership. These CPD opportunities empower nurses to grow continuously and adapt to the evolving needs of the veterinary profession.

Client engagement is another area where the Academy offers support, with courses that provide practical advice on communicating costs, handling client relationships, and ensuring confidentiality — skills that are crucial for veterinary nurses in their day-to-day practice.

VN Awareness Month is a time to celebrate the dedication and expertise of veterinary nurses, and the RCVS Academy is proud to offer the tools and resources to support them every step of the way. Whether you're a student, a newly registered RVN, or an experienced nurse looking to expand your knowledge, the Academy provides a wealth of opportunities for professional growth and progression.

Celebrate VN Awareness Month with us and explore the Academy's wide range of free courses to support your ongoing progression and success as a veterinary nurse.



To access the RCVS Academy, go to: academy.rcvs.org.uk/ and simply log in using your MyAccount details.

Student reps wanted for Licence to Practise accreditation panels

Ensuring the student perspective

We are currently seeking student representatives for our Licence to Practise accreditation panels which review accreditation applications and consider compliance levels, for reporting to the RCVS Veterinary Nurse Education Committee (VNEC).

We welcome Veterinary Nurse Education Committee (VNEC). We welcome applications from either student veterinary nurses who are currently in their final year of the licence to practise qualification or RVNs who have been on the Register for less than two years. The student representative provides a key role within the panel, providing their perspective to submitted applications, ensuring that the proposed programme promotes student empowerment and preparation for working as an RVN.

“We welcome applications from either student veterinary nurses who are currently in their final year of the licence to practise qualification or RVNs who have been on the Register for less than two years.”

Visitations last for three days, and panel members need to be able to devote time both before and afterwards for attending meetings via MS Teams, reviewing applications and report writing. The RCVS will pay a loss of earnings allowance to cover the time commitment, training and visits, as well as reasonable expenses. If you are interested and would like to find out more, please contact the VN Team at vnqa@rcvs.org.uk.



Introducing new clinical supervisor training

Improving support for this critical role

As members of the VN Qualifications Team, qualifications assessors are dedicated to engaging and supporting delivery sites, clinical supervisors, and students. Through these interactions, several recurring issues and challenges faced by clinical supervisors have been identified. For example, it is often noted that standardisation across delivery sites is minimal, meaning clinical supervisors supporting students on different programmes are often having to meet different expectations. Whilst the development of the RCVS Academy Clinical Supervisor course has gone some way to addressing issues like this, a lack of understanding and appreciation for the RCVS professional behaviour element of the courses is still evident.

To address these common themes, the RCVS qualifications assessors have developed a clinical supervisor training programme, to compliment the RCVS Academy course and Academy Live sessions. This training programme will be trialled at the VN Educator Conference in June of this year, presenting

the educators with practical strategies and insights to effectively support and guide clinical supervisors. Key discussion topics will include communication, professional behaviours, and neurodiversity. In addition to sharing information, the training will foster networking opportunities among educators, allowing for meaningful discussions on these key topics with VN educator peers.

Following delivery at the VN Educator Conference, the qualifications assessors will be seeking feedback from those who attended to further develop the training programme ahead of delivery to clinical supervisors at the British Veterinary Nursing Association Congress in October. The final session planned for this year will be delivered at the second VN Educator Conference in October. The goal is to enhance the overall experience for clinical supervisors and ensure their work aligns with the RCVS Standards Framework. By collaborating and learning from one another, educators and clinical supervisors will have an opportunity to consider their current practices and enhance the training and support in the practice setting.

VN Vision events update

What's next?

Supported through the work of VN Futures, the RCVS facilitated a series of *'VN Vision – the future of team-based veterinary healthcare'* engagement events during 2024/25 to gain views from the veterinary nursing profession on their aspirations for veterinary nursing.

During these events, we gathered a large amount of data that will assist us in understanding key themes and directions for the development of veterinary nursing that will feed into future projects and initiatives to help drive the profession forward.

Activities during 2025

The data collected from the sessions has undergone thematic analysis, with five key themes emerging, as depicted below.

Key themes

Culture

Education

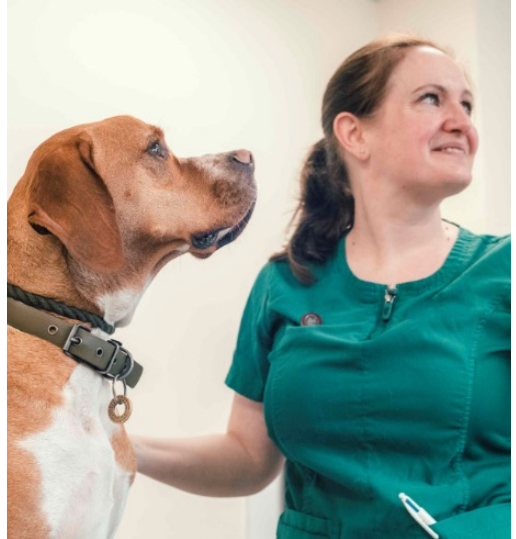
Enhancing the VN role

Leadership

Regulation to support practice

The sub-themes for these key areas — along with a narrative outlining how they connect to future project work, practical implementation in veterinary settings, and the significance of culture reform — will be published in the coming months.

During 2025 we are scheduled to attend several congresses and events to share an overview of our initial findings and maintain engagement with the profession on the future of veterinary nursing. We have already attended the British Small Animal Veterinary Association Congress and look forward to also attending the following:



- Veterinary Management Group Congress (23 to 25 April, Stratford Upon Avon)
- Association of Zoo and Exotic Veterinary Nurses Congress (17 to 18 May, West Midland Safari Park)
- British Veterinary Nursing Association Congress (10 to 12 October, Telford)
- London Vet Show (20 to 21 November, London)

If you are attending any of these events, please do attend our session or come and speak to us.

What next?

During the 2024 events, it was clear that many veterinary nurses aspire to a future where their skills and scope are utilised more effectively within the current legislation.

Some of the sessions we run this year will begin to explore how we can help practices develop systems and guidelines that will empower nurses to work to their professional potential and, by doing so, enhance team-based healthcare, client experience, accessibility to veterinary healthcare, and practice efficiency.

Update on Mind Matters funded mental health in SVN education research

Recommendations for mental health curricula design to be published

Work has now been completed on the final Mind Matters Initiative Sarah Brown Mental Health Research Grant project, which was awarded funding in 2023. Dr Faye Didymus and Dr Jackie Hargreaves from Leeds Beckett University explored how and where mental health education and principles are integrated into the curricula for veterinary nursing (VN) diplomas and degrees.

The project entailed two phases:

Phase one: Phase one was a scoping review of mental health education within student veterinary nurse (SVN) curricula. Within this, curriculum documents already available online from veterinary nursing educational establishments for every provider of veterinary nursing were reviewed. Further information about taught mental health content was also obtained via an online survey of VN tutors.

Phase two: Phase two progressed to a deep exploration of mental health education and mental health experiences via interviews with SVNs, VN tutors, and qualified VNs. Thematic analysis was used, and the findings were triangulated with the three groups: VNs, SVNs, and VN tutors. These findings considered the current experiences of SVNs, VN tutors, and VNs both during their education and in practice and how these learnings could inform future recommendations for mental health curricula design.

Data from the scoping review and interviews are now being used to generate a set of recommendations that aim to enhance the



Dr Faye Didymus (left) and Dr Jackie Hargreaves

provision of mental health content with VN curricula. These recommendations could support current students whilst in further education (FE) or higher education (HE), whilst on placement, and during their future careers.

Dr Didymus and Dr Hargreaves are currently disseminating their work and will present at the **Mental Wellbeing in HE Conference**, run by AdvanceHE, in Sheffield in May 2025, and at the **MMI Mental Health Research Symposium** in Birmingham in October 2025. Further funding opportunities that will allow the researchers to build on their recommendations from this project are currently being explored.

Their set of recommendations is due to be published in due course.



While the Mind Matters Sarah Brown Mental Health Research Grant programme has now come to an end, if you are interested in veterinary mental health research, Mind Matters now has a new grant programme which is currently accepting applications. This year, there are three research grants available: two £5,000 Discovery Grants, targeted towards postgraduate or early career researchers looking to kick-start small-scale studies; and one £15,000 Impact Grant, aimed at more established researchers working on more substantial medium-size projects. Applications for both grants are open to researchers at all career stages.

“If you are interested in veterinary mental health research, Mind Matters now has a new grant programme which is currently accepting applications.”

Applications must reflect one of MMI's strategic areas for 2025. This includes mental health in veterinary education, and MMI are particularly interested in veterinary nursing studies.

For more information on the new MMI research grant programme, please visit the **Mind Matters website** or contact the MMI Team on **researchgrants@rcvs.org.uk**. All proposals must be sent to **researchgrants@rcvs.org.uk** by 11.59pm on Wednesday 28 May 2025.

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