

End of an era

*Saying goodbye to
RCVS Awards*



In this issue: VN Council nominations, new Skills List, Golden Jubilee Award, CPD audit, NPL feedback, TP numbers, enrolment process, microchipping advice, new medicines publication, English language testing, Mind Matters Initiative, ACOVENE audit, international registrants, RCVS Awards reception, staff contact details.



New member of VN Council

Marie Rippingale REVN will be joining Veterinary Nurses Council from its February 2016 meeting onwards, following the resignation of Amy Robinson as a Council member. Marie (pictured above) came third in the Veterinary Nurses Council election which took place earlier this year.

Liz Cox was also confirmed as new VN Council Chair at this year's RCVS Day, replacing Kathy Kissick, who becomes Vice-Chair.

Put yourself forward

Candidates sought for VN Council

Veterinary nurses who wish to have a say on the standards of education and professional conduct for the profession, are encouraged to stand as candidates for Veterinary Nurses Council which has regulatory responsibilities for matters concerning training, qualifications, professional standards and registration.

The nomination period runs until 5pm on Sunday 31 January 2016. In order to stand, candidates will need to complete a nomination form, submit a short biography and personal statement and supply a high resolution digital photograph. Each candidate will also need two nominators who must be registered veterinary nurses who are not current VN Council members.

Two places will be up for grabs in next year's elections, which run from mid-March until the end of April, with successful candidates taking up their four-year terms at RCVS Day in July 2016.

Liz Cox, Chair of VN Council, adds: "I would strongly encourage all those who want to have a say and play a leadership role in veterinary nursing to stand up and be counted and put themselves forward as a candidate. It is a very exciting time to join VN Council as the new Royal Charter has formalised the Council's powers to regulate education and our professional standards, meaning that the decisions you make can have a very real impact on the profession."

Nomination forms, guidance notes and frequently asked questions for prospective candidates are available to download from www.rcvs.org.uk/vncouncil16

New Skills List for 2016

Guidance currently being developed

At its November meeting, the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee approved, in principle, a revised list of skills and procedures that newly qualified veterinary nurses must be proficient in upon joining the Register and entering clinical practice.

The main aim of the revised list is to make it up-to-date with, and reflective of, current practice (so, for example, microchipping has now been added to the list), to make it more consistent and have a clearer focus on effective clinical skills.

The revised list comes after a consultation this summer in which we asked both veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons to comment on a provisional

Day-one Skills List that had been developed by the VN Education Committee in conjunction with our Veterinary Nursing Department. We received 303 responses to this consultation – 49% of respondents were veterinary surgeons and 48% were veterinary nurses, with the remainder being from awarding organisations, colleges and representative bodies.

Much of the feedback we received was then fed into the revised list, which was presented to and approved by the Committee in November. However, the Committee has now asked the College to develop further guidance for each of the skills and procedures listed. The list, plus guidance, will be brought back before the VN Education Committee in March 2016 for approval and then to VN Council in May.

New focus for prestigious award

Call for Golden Jubilee nominations

At the end of November, we relaunched our Golden Jubilee Award, an accolade that recognises those veterinary nurses playing a leadership role in the profession.

The relaunch comes after Veterinary Nurses Council agreed some significant changes to the award process and criteria at its October 2015 meeting. This included restricting the award to veterinary nurses only and making the award criteria more focused on how nominees are taking a leadership role within the profession.

Liz Cox, Chair of Veterinary Nurses Council, explained: "We agreed changes to this award in order to both encourage more nominations and to ensure that those who are nominated are people who are pushing forward the profession, whether that be clinically, politically, or in terms of raising public awareness of what we do.

"If this sounds like someone you know then please don't hesitate to put them forward for the award and help raise the profile of the profession even further."

The award was founded in 2011 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first RCVS training course for veterinary nurses. Sue Badger RVN (pictured right with award) received the award in 2012. She says: "I was overwhelmed to become the second recipient of the Golden Jubilee Award and to say that it was a complete surprise is something of an understatement.

"One of the characteristics of a profession is its ability to produce individuals that are prepared to represent its members. These must be farsighted individuals in order to ensure that there is clear direction for future development. I am confident that veterinary nursing in the UK has reached that point."

Although only veterinary nurses can be nominees, the primary nominator can be either a veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse and the two supporting nominators can be laypeople. The deadline for nomination forms is **Friday 29 January 2016** and the award will be given at RCVS Day on 15 July 2016. The winner will also be given a speaking opportunity at that year's BVNA Congress in October.



Audit of continuing professional development

Increase in VNs using online system

Our annual audit of continuing professional development (CPD) for veterinary nurses found that almost two-thirds met the minimum requirement of our Code of Professional Conduct to undertake at least 45 hours of CPD over a rolling three-year period.

This year, we asked some 798 veterinary nurses to share their CPD records with us, of whom 739 (or 92.6%) responded. Those audited were split into four groups: a random sample of 459 veterinary nurses across all postcode areas; 107 VNs who had responded to last year's audit but did not meet the requirement; 80 VNs who failed to respond at all to last year's audit; and 152 VNs who confirmed they were not compliant when renewing their registration in 2014.

We also saw the overall compliance rate for the 739 VNs who responded to this year's audit was 63.7%, compared to 64.1% in 2014. As in previous years, the most common reasons given for non-compliance were maternity leave, family commitments and working part-time. We would like to reiterate that the CPD requirement still needs to be met under these circumstances.

We also saw an increase in the number of veterinary nurses using the free, online Professional Development Record, with 71% of respondent VNs signed up to it, compared to 59% last year.

For advice on what constitutes CPD and how to engage with it, contact Jenny Soreskog-Turp, CPD Officer, on j.soreskog-turp@rcvs.org.uk or **020 7202 0701**.

Redevelopment of the NPL

Call for feedback

In 2010, RCVS Awards, in conjunction with IT company SkillWise, developed the Veterinary Nursing Progress Log (NPL), a programme used for recording VN students' progress and assessment by tutors/supervisors against our list of Day-one Skills. This tool was adopted by VN Council in 2011.

The NPL is now well-established, having been implemented in September 2010 and, whilst it has benefitted from some enhancements to functionality as a result of the Veterinary European Clinical Training and Assessment Record (VECTAR) project, it is now time to gather feedback from all user groups to further enhance and develop the tool.

Initial feedback was gathered via focus group sessions during BVNA Congress in October and there is a short survey, accessible from all NPL homepages, inviting all students, clinical coaches and quality assurance personnel to comment on the various functions of the tool.

Julie Dugmore, our Head of Veterinary Nursing, says: "Although the current NPL is providing a very valuable guide and standardisation regarding the acquisition of Day-one Skills for veterinary nurses, there is scope, as a regulator, for us to improve the user experience of this tool."

"I would encourage all users to take five minutes to complete the survey and highlight what they like and dislike about the current functionality."

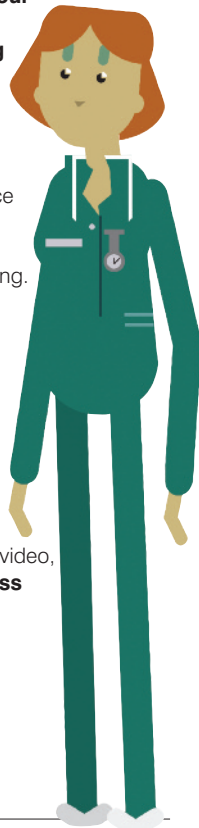
Practice Standards Scheme is go!

Video highlights benefits

On Friday 20 November at the London Vet Show we officially launched our new Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) to the profession, including a fun new animated video (see picture on right) introducing and highlighting its many benefits.

The new Scheme was introduced by Jacqui Molyneux, Chair of the Practice Standards Group which coordinates the PSS, and Anthony Roberts, PSS Senior Manager, at a breakfast meeting. During the presentation they highlighted what was new in the Scheme – including the optional awards to allow practices to demonstrate where they excel, the new team of PSS Assessors and 'Stanley', the online administration and support system.

To find out more about the new Scheme, and to watch the animated video, please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/newpss



Topping up on TPs

Significant increase in numbers

At the time of publication there are **2,322** RCVS-approved veterinary nursing training practices (TPs) in the country, an increase of **almost 200** since the beginning of the year.

However, despite the overall increase, there are some significant regional disparities in terms of the number of available TPs, compared to the number of student VNs in a given area. So, for example, the South of England has 384 TPs for 625 students, while Wales and the Borders has 110 TPs for 178 students.

Since October 2014, 58 premises have withdrawn their TP status. In each case we asked the practice

to provide the reason for their withdrawal. These cited various reasons, including the fact that there was not a student VN in training and there was extra cost to maintaining the status; lack of confidence in local colleges; the fact that the premises had closed; and the fact that a student had qualified and they were not looking to train another one immediately.

If you know of a practice premises which would be suitable to become a TP, then please direct them to the Veterinary Nursing Department on **020 7202 0788** or vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk

Enrol up, enrol up!

How we have changed the enrolment process

The enrolment period is now in full swing and, unlike previous years, is proving to be a less challenging and more streamlined process for all involved, thanks to a number of changes we have instituted here at the College.

However, it is not just about what we are doing at our end – we need centres to make sure that the information they supply us with is complete and sufficient. Here is a guide to the enrolment process and our requirements.

The process

Every year we enrol approximately 1,500 student veterinary nurses, with the majority of these being processed between September and December. This year, in order to address previous issues regarding a significant backlog in our enrolment process, we have employed a full-time member of staff to help solely with enrolment checking and also introduced a new and improved process for doing these checks.

As in previous years, in order to enrol students we require four key documents:

- an enrolment spreadsheet accurately completed with all student, centre and training practice details;
- the qualification registration details from the awarding organisation or higher education institution. It is not possible to enrol a student before they are registered onto a qualification;
- a completed enrolment application form;
- identification for the student – this should contain a clear image of the student's face.

“Every year we enrol approximately 1,500 student veterinary nurses.”

We also require the payment which, ideally, should be received on the same day as the hard copy documents. Once we receive hard copies of the required documents, the enrolment process can begin.

At this point, the centre is contacted and informed that either all documents are complete and the payment has been received, or we request that they help us with incomplete or missing evidence, for example, by providing, qualification registration details and/or payment. Where we require further information to be submitted, we now contact the centre for weekly updates on progress.

Once we have all four key documents and the payment, our dedicated Enrolment Administrator checks that the

information (such as the training practice details and practice principal signatures) supplied is correct. The centre is informed of any anomalies and/or omissions, and further information is requested where needed. If this information is not forthcoming we make sure to chase it up on a weekly basis.

Where all the information is correct and sufficient, the enrolments are processed and, for those students using the Nursing Progress Log (NPL), their login details are created. To date, only one centre has provided all required documentation at first submission, which meant that the enrolments could be processed very efficiently and that the centre's students were enrolled in just two weeks.

At the time of writing this article we have done the following:

- enrolled 762 students (across 29 centres) of whom 160 are higher education students;
- issued NPL logins to those enrolled at centres using the system;
- issued student letters of enrolment to the centres.

Furthermore, we are currently waiting for further information regarding 25 batches of enrolment applications from 17 centres and are in the process of checking six batches of applications.

Enrolment checklist

It is essential that we receive correct and complete documentation for each student in order to process their enrolment. All documentation and payments must be submitted to us via the centre attended by a student.

Below is a simple checklist for centres for completing our process:

- ✓ Payment (made to the RCVS by the centre and appropriately referenced)
- ✓ Completed spreadsheet submitted to **vnenrol@rcvs.org.uk**
- ✓ Completed enrolment application form for each student
- ✓ Confirmation of qualification registration (stating full name, date of birth, name of qualification, qualification reference number, awarding organisation, date of registration and registration number)
- ✓ ID with a clear image of the student's face (passport, national ID card, valid driving licence or birth certificate accompanied by certified passport photo)

Been caught cheating

Forgeries on student records

Despite the work we have carried out to raise awareness with student veterinary nurses about the pitfalls of forgeries, sadly, it is still the case that a handful of students every year submit fraudulently-completed documentation to us.

In the last two years we have received five fraudulent documents, which have been submitted in support of applications to join the Register.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind student veterinary nurses that a verified forgery could lead to them being prevented from joining the Register. Even where this sanction is not taken, the student VN will be called for an interview with the Chair of VN Council and the Registrar and will be asked to explain their actions.

We will also inform the student's further or higher education institution as well as their training practice, where applicable.

Julie Dugmore, Head of Veterinary Nursing, says: "Being caught forging a signature on a document is a serious matter and can leave a black mark against your name. A record of the issue will be kept on file and may be taken into consideration in relation to any future concern regarding conduct. It simply is not worth the risk.

"If a student veterinary nurse is having trouble getting a signature or other details needed to complete their registration application, then they should, in the first instance, contact the Veterinary Nursing Department for help on **020 7202 0788** or **vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk**."

Veterinary nurses and microchipping

New guidance sets out VN role

We have recently published a new chapter of supporting guidance to our Codes of Professional Conduct entitled 'Microchips, microchipping and animals without microchips', which consolidates our existing guidance on microchipping and also includes new guidance on the compulsory microchipping regulations that will come into force in England from April 2016. The guidance was approved by Standards Committee, which includes a representative from VN Council, at its meeting in September 2015.

Under the new regulations, The Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015, veterinary nurses and student veterinary nurses, acting under the direction of a veterinary surgeon, will be able to implant microchips in dogs without having to attend a specific microchipping training course beforehand.

This was not originally the situation, however, as previously the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) had stipulated that, under the regulations, veterinary nurses had to attend a compulsory training course before they could implant microchips.

However, a joint letter sent by the RCVS alongside the British Veterinary Association and the British Veterinary Nursing Association earlier this year stressed that, by the time they had earned their registrable qualification, veterinary nurses were sufficiently qualified to safely implant a microchip under the direction of a veterinary surgeon.

Defra subsequently agreed to amend the regulations and exempt veterinary nurses from further training when the new legislation comes into force in England. This measure has also been adopted in Wales. The Scottish Government has yet to publish its regulations, which are also due to be implemented in 2016.



In order to ensure that student veterinary nurses are trained in how to safely implant microchips in small animals, this will be added to our Day-one Skills List (see page 2), which represent the tasks and skills we expect veterinary nurses to have upon completing their training and

entering practice as a registered veterinary nurse. We will expect awarding organisations and higher education institutions offering veterinary nurse training to attune their curricula to the Skills List once it has been finalised.

To view the supporting guidance on microchipping, please visit **www.rcvs.org.uk/microchipping**

New medicines publication

Controlled drugs advice for VNs

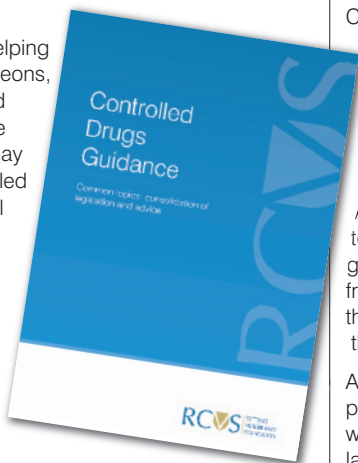
We have recently published a new guidance document on controlled drugs which brings together key parts of existing legislation on veterinary medicines, as well as the College's advice, in one handy place.

Veterinary professionals involved in prescribing, supplying, recording, storing, disposing of or destroying controlled drugs must comply with the law on misuse of drugs and veterinary medicines. Regulation of controlled drugs within veterinary practice is governed and inspected by the Home Office and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) as well as the College.

This publication is therefore aimed at helping those veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and other members of the practice team who may be managing controlled drugs, with their legal and professional responsibilities.

The publication includes a whole chapter on guidance about veterinary nurses and the administration of controlled drugs.

To view it in full, please visit www.rcvs.org.uk/publications



English language competency

Changes to VN Code

At its meeting in October, VN Council approved a number of changes to the *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses* to specify that effective written and spoken English is a requirement for all veterinary nurses when they are communicating with clients and colleagues.

Previously the Code required that veterinary nurses communicate effectively with clients, but had no express requirements in relation to ability to speak or write in English. The changes can be viewed at www.rcvs.org.uk/vncode

Changes have also been made to Chapter 11 ('Communication and consent') of the supporting guidance to complement the new Code requirement. To read this, visit www.rcvs.org.uk/consent

The changes follow a consultation by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) earlier this year on proposed changes to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 in regard to giving the College powers to withhold registration from EU-qualified vets and veterinary nurses on the grounds of 'serious or concrete' doubts about their English language proficiency.

At the time of writing, we are still awaiting the publication of the consultation results, after which we will work with Defra to decide what form of language testing is most appropriate and how to integrate it into our registration process for both veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons.

Student fitness to practise

Publication coming next year

We are currently in the process of putting together a new guide on fitness to practise for student veterinary nurses and providers of veterinary nursing education. The aim is to introduce student veterinary nurses to the concept of fitness to practise at an early stage and underpin the work of training providers in preparing student veterinary nurses for professional life. The guide also offers good practice guidance on identifying and investigating fitness to practise concerns.

The guidance is being prepared by a working party, overseen by the Standards Committee. The working party includes members of VN Council, the British Veterinary Nursing Association and representatives of a variety of training providers and awarding organisations.

The guide, which is expected to be published early in 2016, will be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/publications

Taking charge of our future

Vet Futures report published

The Vet Futures report, 'Taking charge of our future,' was published at the British Veterinary Association (BVA) Congress, within the London Vet Show, on 20 November. The report was the culmination of a year of research, engagement and discussion led by the RCVS and the BVA, designed to help the veterinary profession shape its future.

Six ambitions were outlined in the report, with recommendations under each, and an Action Group will help develop these into specific actions. The ambitions were discussed at a joint meeting of VN Council and the British Veterinary Nursing Association in Telford in October, and were met with broad agreement.

However, it was felt that a separate VN Futures project should focus on the specific relevance of these themes to the veterinary nursing profession, and how they should be taken forward, and also to develop any new VN-specific themes. This project will kick-off in January 2016 and there will be opportunities for all members of the veterinary nursing team, those involved in VN education and those employing nurses to be involved.

The Vet Futures report can be downloaded from www.vetfutures.org.uk/resources.

VN Council on the move

BVNA Congress report

In October, VN Council held its first ever meeting outside London when it met at the Holiday Inn in Telford the day before the start of BVNA Congress.

Once again, our stand at BVNA Congress proved very popular, with hundreds of veterinary nurses visiting throughout the course of the weekend to sign the VN title petition and have a go at our Vet Futures-themed shapes game, which was won by Jennifer McFarlane RVN from Stirling. VN Council Chair Liz Cox and Head of Veterinary Nursing Julie Dugmore also participated in a question and answer session with delegates alongside BVNA Vice-President Fiona Andrew and BVNA President Samantha Morgan.

The next meeting of VN Council is due to take place on Tuesday 2 February 2016 at our offices in Belgravia House, London. Anyone is welcome to attend, although it is recommended that you email Annette Amato, VN Council Secretary, on a.amato@rcvs.org.uk beforehand.

All veterinary minds matter

Mind Matters is for the whole team

Our Mind Matters Initiative seeks to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all members of the veterinary team. We also seek to learn from other medical professions so that we can work together, where appropriate. It was with this in mind that we organised 'Medical Minds Matter', a one-day conference at Maudsley Learning in October, bringing together members of the veterinary, pharmaceutical, human medical and dental teams, alongside representatives from non-medical professions, including architecture and law. Among those attending was VN Council Vice-Chair Kathy Kissick (pictured front right).

The conference highlighted many areas of commonality, for example, in terms of the triggers for mental ill-health, the barriers to seeking help and the provision of support. We are looking forward to developing some joint projects with these other professions.

Meanwhile, veterinary nurses, veterinary surgeons and practice managers have attended a series of four mental health awareness courses over the last few weeks, in Winchester, Wrexham, Newcastle and Coventry. The courses equip delegates with the skills and knowledge required to enable them to identify common signs and symptoms of mental ill-health, have important first conversations with affected colleagues, and signpost to relevant sources of help.

We trialled different course providers and formats, and it is envisaged that a series of courses will be rolled out across the UK in 2016. Email Mind Matters Project Director Lizzie Lockett on lizzie@vetmindmatters.org to be added to our email circulation list, and follow us on Twitter via [@vetmindmatters](https://twitter.com/vetmindmatters).



European auditing

ACOVENE visit in November

The Accreditation Committee for Veterinary Nurse Education (ACOVENE), a voluntary organisation founded in 2007 to accredit veterinary nurse education programmes in the EU, recently visited the College as part of its ongoing auditing process.

The College is accredited by ACOVENE and, by virtue of the fact that we regulate veterinary nursing education, so too are all higher and further education institutions offering training in the UK. Veterinary schools in Italy, Belgium, Norway, Portugal and the Netherlands are also ACOVENE-accredited.

The focus of the inspection in November, which was undertaken by Maurizio Albano, an ACOVENE Board member from Italy, was to explore the quality monitoring process of veterinary nurse training in UK, including an explanation of the standards we set for awarding organisations/ higher education institutions, centres and training practices, as well as how we follow up our visits and conduct interviews with students.

Actions that had been set for the College after previous audits include improvements to how we monitor and inspect various centres in terms of looking at their resources and staffing. During the visit, ACOVENE checked that these suggested improvements had been put in place.

Veterinary nurses graduating from ACOVENE-accredited programmes have attained a known minimum standard of knowledge and skills which are recognised by all affiliated institutions.

As all the programmes have been subject to inspections and ongoing monitoring by the Board, which is recognised and endorsed by the Federation of Companion Animal Veterinary Associations, it allows for greater mobility of veterinary nurses within the European Union. For example, graduates of ACOVENE-accredited courses would not need to pass pre-registration examinations before joining the Register of Veterinary Nurses.

Increase in international registrants

Plans changed for pre-registration exam

The number of veterinary nurses trained outside of the UK wanting to practise in this country has noticeably increased this year, with a record number entering the Register of Veterinary Nurses.

At time of publication we have registered 76 international veterinary nurses, compared to 53 in the same period last year. Some of those who have joined the Register had to pass the veterinary nurse pre-registration examination, which has also seen an increase in its success rate.

Victoria Hedges, Examinations Manager for the College, is currently working on a new format for the pre-registration examination, which is likely to be introduced in summer 2016. This new examination will consist of a 200-questions paper and a 10-station practical examination in the form of an objective structured clinical examination (OSCE). Both elements of the examination will be compulsory for all applications for registration made after 30 January 2016 by veterinary nurses trained outside of the European Union.

Veterinary nurses trained in the EU will continue to have their applications assessed and will only be required to undertake further assessment if areas of our current Day-one Competences and Skills List have not been addressed in their qualification.

If you employ or are planning to employ a veterinary nurse trained outside the UK, please contact vnoverseas@rcvs.org.uk or **020 7202 0788** to discuss the process.

International registrants in 2015 by country:



Farewell to RCVS Awards

Closure of awarding body marked with ceremony



On the afternoon of Tuesday 1 December, we held a special reception at our offices in Belgravia House to mark the end of RCVS Awards – our former awarding organisation for veterinary nursing qualifications.

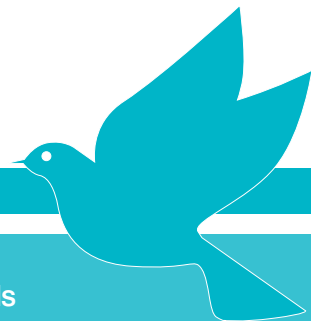
Over 50 people were in attendance, many of whom had played a prominent role in setting up the awarding organisation in 1997, its subsequent administration and the delivery of veterinary nursing qualifications through its associated centres. Those attending included external verifiers who were responsible for monitoring the quality of the courses that were

delivered by the centres, external examiners, former RCVS Awards Board members and former and current staff from our Veterinary Nursing Department.

Introducing the occasion, Julie Dugmore, Head of Veterinary Nursing (pictured below, centre, with Victoria Hedges, left, and Annette Amato, right), said: "We felt that we couldn't let RCVS Awards go without having some kind of celebration to mark the end of an era. We have managed to close RCVS Awards ahead of schedule and received our notification of closure from Ofqual [The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation] on 20 November. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff in the VN Department for their help and support in ensuring the closure went as smoothly as possible."

Colonel Neil Smith (pictured left), a Past-President of the RCVS who formerly served as Chair of the RCVS Awards Board, added: "In some ways this is a sad day, but it is also a day on which we can be very proud. What I have seen over the years is increased professionalism and better standards, not only in the Veterinary Nursing Department and RCVS Awards but throughout the profession as a whole and, in regard to the awarding organisation, we have now passed the baton to others."





RCVS Awards was officially closed on 20 November 2015 but the process of winding it down began a number of years earlier. This followed a decision by VN Council in 2011 to close the awarding organisation, having recognised that it presented a potential conflict of interest with our primary role as a professional regulator that sets the standards of education and training for veterinary nurses.

“It also comes at a time when everyone seems very positive about the way forward for veterinary nursing and there seems to be a clear vision for the profession.”

The last cohort of student veterinary nurses was enrolled on to RCVS Awards in 2012. In 2014, a formal surrender of recognition was submitted to, and accepted by, Ofqual, and, following this, we started to develop a timeline for closure and made arrangements to ensure that all remaining student veterinary nurses would either complete their qualification or transfer to another awarding organisation by the time of closure.

In the meantime, the Veterinary Nurse Education Subcommittee (as it was then) granted full approval for the awarding organisations Central Qualifications and City & Guilds to deliver the Level 3 Diploma via their associated centres. As the regulator of veterinary nursing education and training, our focus will now be on accrediting and quality monitoring those awarding organisations and centres delivering qualifications and ensuring that students are trained to the professional standards detailed in our Day-one Competences and Day-one Skills List.

Virginia Pott was one of the first cohort of external verifiers who worked for RCVS Awards when it was set up in 1997 and attended the reception. She said: “I think it was always difficult for the RCVS to have two roles and so the closure of RCVS Awards has brought some clarity to the College as a regulator. It also comes at a time when everyone seems very positive about the way forward for veterinary nursing and there seems to be a clear vision for the profession.”

The RCVS Awards website is also now defunct and much of the content that is still relevant to our role as the regulator has been transferred over to the main College website (www.rcvs.org.uk).

Timeline of RCVS Awards

1997: RCVS Awards is accredited as an awarding body for vocational qualifications by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the predecessor of Ofqual.

1998: RCVS Awards starts to offer nationally recognised vocational qualifications (NVQs).

2002 and 2006: RCVS Awards is reaccredited by the QCA to provide the NVQ in Veterinary Nursing.

2008: The regulatory functions of the QCA are incorporated into the newly founded Ofqual.

2010: RCVS Awards is recognised by Ofqual to operate in the Qualifications and Credit Framework and to provide the Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing.

October 2011: VN Council decided to wind down RCVS Awards to prevent a potential conflict of interest with the College's regulatory role.

August 2012: The last cohort of students is enrolled on to the RCVS Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing.

December 2013: Full approval is granted by the RCVS for awarding organisations Central Qualifications and City & Guilds to provide the Level 3 Diploma as a licence to practise qualification.

March 2014: A formal surrender of recognition is submitted to and accepted by Ofqual.

April 2014: All remaining students and centres associated with RCVS Awards are informed by letter of the timeline for closure of RCVS Awards.

June 2015: The final theory and practical OSCE examinations for RCVS Awards students.

November 2015: Ofqual officially confirms the closure of RCVS Awards after the remaining students either complete their courses or are transferred to another awarding organisation.

Meet the new team member

Catherine Phillips RVN REVN HonAssocRCVS



What does that role entail?

The role entails the evaluation of all forms of assessment to ensure fairness and consistency in the process, as well as reporting back to the College on the structure, content, academic standards and teaching of the Dip AVN programmes.

The College is currently conducting a review of the Dip AVN and, as the External Quality Assurer, I am required to advise the working party set up to look at this on developments relevant to the qualification based on findings and feedback from the students and centres that deliver it.

What is your background?

My full time role is as Head of Department Veterinary Nursing at Hartpury College in Gloucestershire, where I oversee all of the higher and further education veterinary nursing programmes. I initially qualified as a small animal veterinary nurse before making the transition to life in equine veterinary practice. I subsequently gained my equine veterinary nursing qualification whilst working as Senior Nurse at the Three Counties Equine Hospital in Gloucestershire. I am also currently completing a research project as the final stage of studying the MSc in Veterinary Education with the Royal Veterinary College.

What is your role at the RCVS?

My role is to act as the External Quality Assurer for the delivery of the Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (Dip AVN) for the RCVS.

Who does what...

Julie Dugmore

Head of Veterinary Nursing

Annette Amato

Deputy Head of Veterinary Nursing, Secretary to VN Council

Vicky Hedges

RCVS examinations

Helen Bourne

Centre approvals and monitoring, ACOVENE support

Sophie Jamieson

Initial VN registrations

Claire O'Leary (maternity cover)

Examinations, Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing, overseas registration applications

Chloe Baxter

Student enrolments and careers

Lily Lipman

Accreditation and quality monitoring for VN qualifications

Jenny Soreskog-Turp

Continuing professional development and Professional Development Record

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