



Leonardo da Vinci funding won

Nursing Progress Log heading to Europe



In this issue: new draft Code, online tool, funding secured, Register published, new badge, jubilee celebrations, postnominals decision, mixed practice pathway, new territories for EVs, NPL advice, events and congresses, exam advice.

Code-making

Your views sought on new draft

We are seeking feedback from those involved with veterinary nurse training on a new draft Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses, which would replace the existing RCVS Guide to Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses.

The new Code would be the benchmark for professional conduct against which registered veterinary nurses would be measured in any hearings on serious professional misconduct held by the recently-introduced VN Disciplinary Committee.

The draft has been developed by a review group which also produced a draft Code for vets. The purpose of the review is to ensure that guidance to the profession, and the public, is clear, for example, using consistent language to distinguish between what must be done and what is advised.

The new Code is a short, principles-based document, using the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe's Code

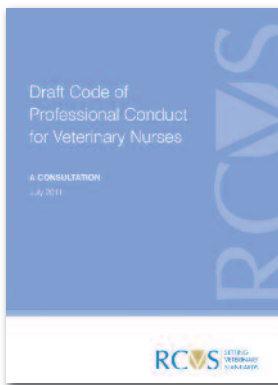
of Conduct as the starting point. It will be supported by additional advice on specific areas of veterinary practice or issues, for example, clinical governance.

For the first time, the draft proposes that veterinary nurses make a declaration on joining the VN Register, which underlines the primary importance of animal health and welfare:

"I PROMISE AND SOLEMNLY DECLARE that my constant endeavour will be to ensure the welfare of animals committed to my care and that I will pursue the work of my profession with integrity and accept my responsibilities to my clients, the public, the profession and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons."

The new Code, together with the consultation paper, can be downloaded at www.rcvs.org.uk/VNcodeconsultation.

Comments should be sent to Christopher Murdoch, Secretary to the Guides Review Working Party, at c.murdoch@rcvs.org.uk, by Friday, 21 October 2011.



Preparation time

Online prep tool for student VNs

If your practice offers VN student placements, then feel free to point your students towards an online resource drawn up by the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) in collaboration with the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies. Called the 'VN Online Clinical Placement Tool,' this is designed to help student VNs prepare for, and understand, the expectations of a practice environment – to the benefit of all concerned. Once completed, students can print out a certificate, so you could ask them to do this before arriving on placement.

"We produced this in collaboration with veterinary nurses at the RVC's Veterinary Nursing School," says Sarah Baillie, a senior lecturer at the RVC and part of the team that drew up a similar resource for veterinary students going on extra-mural studies (EMS). "We used the vet students' 'EMS Driving Licence' as a model and spoke to veterinary nurses

and students in practice and at the RVC to produce a VN version – the idea is to help student VNs get the most from their placements."

Student veterinary nurses – and anyone else – can try it out at www.live.ac.uk/vn_placement.



Next stop, Europe!

Funding granted for VECTAR project

The nail-biting is over! As we went to press, we heard that the bid for our VECTAR NPL project had been awarded Leonardo da Vinci funding.

This means the RCVS will be leading a 'Transfer of Innovation' project, starting this autumn, to introduce clinical coach training and an electronic system of recording practical nursing skills teaching and competence to six European partner schools, in Norway, Finland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal and Italy.

The project will be based on the successful Nursing Progress Log (NPL). For the project, it will be dubbed the Veterinary Clinical Training and Assessment Record (VECTAR), in order to avoid confusion. The project will explore how best the tool, and the training of practice-based mentors, can be developed in the partner schools of nursing. It will be overseen by the Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA), which means that European veterinary employers will have a direct link to the project throughout.

Of course, development is a two-way process, and we very much hope to gain from the experience of our European colleagues in developing and improving the NPL, and accessible training and support for clinical coaches. The next two years will give us an opportunity to extensively evaluate the NPL in UK use and to offer our centres the opportunity to get more closely acquainted with their European colleagues. These opportunities will start in November, with the opening project conference in London. More details, and invitations, will be available soon.

Register now available

The RCVS *List of Veterinary Nurses, incorporating the Register, 2011*, is now available and has been mailed to all those included within it.



The publication, which uses data correct as of 16 May 2011, includes 8,270 Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs), leaving 1,543 on the List. This means that 84% of eligible VNs have now registered: an excellent result in this, the profession's 50th anniversary year. You can check the most up-to-date information on RCVSonline:

www.rcvs.org.uk/registration/check-the-register-list

House party!

Date for your diary: 11 October

As part of this year's Golden Jubilee celebrations, Roger Gale, Conservative MP for Thanet North, is kindly hosting an afternoon reception in the House of Commons, on Tuesday 11 October (4-6pm).

Roger, together with his wife Suzy, is a great supporter of animal welfare, and is chairman of the Conservative Animal Welfare Group.

The event aims to celebrate the veterinary nursing profession's achievements in terms of protecting and promoting animal health and welfare, and underline the need for statutory regulation for nurses.

There will be a number of free tickets available, on a first-come, first-served basis. To register your interest, please contact Fiona Harcourt on f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk.



Badge of honour

New RVN badge on its way

A new badge for registered veterinary nurses will be available soon and, going forward, will enable RVNs to be distinguished from listed veterinary nurses.

All those qualifying since 4 July 2011 will receive the new badge – although registered veterinary nurses qualifying earlier can purchase it.

The new badge itself – and details of how to obtain one – will be revealed at BVNA Congress in October, although we have taken note of feedback from nurses who felt that a startlingly different badge for RVNs may be divisive, so the new one builds closely on the existing badge. We were also pleased to see that nurses had affection for the existing badge, which we would like to continue to foster.

As with the current badge, the new one should only be worn by those whose name is currently entered in the List/Register, to avoid misleading the public.

Walk this way...

Deadline extended for pedometer results

As part of our VN Golden Jubilee celebrations, we launched the 'Step forward' campaign at BSAVA Congress at the end of March.

The campaign encourages everyone in veterinary nursing to take the next step in their careers, even if it's a small one – so that the profession as a whole will take a large step forward.

We hoped that, as part of the campaign, we would see some people who have been working in nursing roles but who have never been trained, take that plunge this year. If you have anyone enrolled for a course or in a TP this year who meets this description, do let us know!

As part of the campaign, we have also been giving away branded pedometers so that VNs – and vets – in practice can tell us how far they walk in a typical day. We aim to use the information to help explain to animal

owners the extent and variety of a veterinary nurse's role.

The person who walks the furthest on a typical shift (be honest now...) will be featured on our website at the end of the campaign. However, although we have given out hundreds of pedometers, we've not yet had a great response back! Are you all ashamed by how little you walk about? Or so exhausted from a long day on your feet that you haven't got the energy to email us? The closing deadline for entries has been extended to **31 August 2011**, so please email Lizzie Lockett at l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk to say how many steps you have done.



Simplifying the alphabet soup

VN Council agrees on postnominals

Postnominals for veterinary nurses will be simplified going forward, according to a decision made by VN Council in May.

The new Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing is a single qualification with multiple pathways, as opposed to the NVQ system, under which there were separate small animal and equine qualifications.

Those achieving the Level 3 Diploma will therefore be given the postnominals RVN only, with no variations.

The ongoing use of REVN and EVN will be limited to those who have qualified by the equine NVQ route and those achieving the Level 3 Diploma via the transitional pathway.



Facing the facts

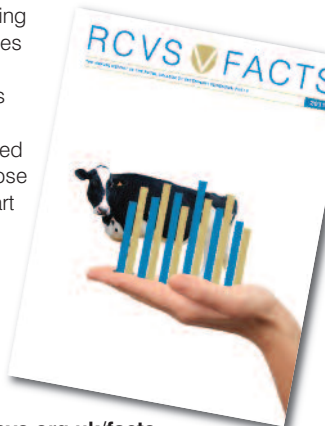
RCVS Facts 2011 now available

RCVS Facts, part two of the RCVS annual report, includes facts and figures about the veterinary nursing and veterinary professions, together with our summarised accounts.

It has a page of facts and figures from RCVS Awards, including that, as of 1 April 2011:

- There were 1,690 training practices and 47 centres
- A quarter of student candidate registrations were undergraduates
- 844 new nurses qualified – just under 80% of those who enrolled at the start of the training period
- There were 9,722 veterinary nurses on the RCVS List/Register, of which 84% were registered

The full document can be downloaded from www.rcvs.org.uk/facts. Part one of the annual report, *RCVS Review*, which includes an article from Gail Lawson RVN to celebrate the Golden Jubilee, can also be downloaded, from www.rcvs.org.uk/review.



Closure threat lifted

Edinburgh's Telford College lives on

We were pleased to hear that the veterinary nursing course at Edinburgh's Telford College (ETC), which was under serious threat of closure, has received a reprieve, and the course will definitely run this autumn.

"The hiatus will have some positive benefits," says Head of Veterinary Nursing, Libby Earle. "It forced an objective review of this long-standing and very successful course that will lead to improvements and the collaboration of the two Scottish veterinary schools (at the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh) in providing practical experience for students."

However, there continue to be concerns about the low uptake of VN training in Scotland more generally, and the ratio of nurses to vets – one of the lowest in the UK.

The problem appears not to be lack of student demand – ETC had over 250 applicants for 20 places this year – it is more a shortage of practices willing to support student VNs.

"We will be working with Scottish colleges to ensure, as best we can, that courses are available and accessible to all practices."

The VN Council will be working to raise awareness with Scottish practices over the coming months. The introduction of the auxiliary training practice (aTP) status, which enables those without a full enough case-load to offer complete training to a VN to work together with other training practices to fill the gap, has already made it easier for practices to get involved with VN training.

Another positive change brought in with the new Level 3 Diploma has been permitting unpaid placements to count towards training time, and, of course, replacing the dreaded portfolio with an easy-to-use online practical training record.

"We will be working with Scottish colleges to ensure, as best we can, that courses are available and accessible to all practices," adds Libby. "Any practice (especially in Scotland) interested in seeing how they might support a student, is urged to contact us!"

For more information on becoming a training practice or auxiliary training practice, please contact vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk.

Mixed option moooves closer

Update on the mixed practice pathway

The new mixed practice pathway of the Level 3 Diploma is now with Ofqual going through the accreditation process and we expect it to be available by the time VN Standard hits your doormat.

You will remember that we developed this especially for Ireland, where mixed practice is prevalent and where nurses working in the Republic are expected to have knowledge of farm animal and equine work.

The new pathway follows the same core units as the existing small animal and equine pathways, and it will be expected that colleges offering the mixed practice option will place more emphasis on aspects of equine and farm animal husbandry when delivering these units. The pathway itself contains 50 credits (like the current small animal and equine pathways) spread over seven units. Two of the units are dedicated to general small animal nursing, while the remainder cover practical anaesthesia (including the support of field anaesthesia and surgery), emergency care in mixed practice, large animal pathology, nursing support of farm animals and horses (especially obstetric and neonatal care) and disease control in farm animal practice.

While initiated by a need in Northern Ireland, we very much hope the new pathway will be of interest to employers in rural areas, where an ability to communicate with farming clients and support veterinary care in this area of practice would be a useful new dimension to veterinary nursing. The pathway is also available as a top-up route for qualified nurses, together with a bridging unit for those VNs lacking knowledge of basic equine and farm animal husbandry. If you are interested in delivering the new pathway, either as an initial route to the Register or as a top-up, please contact the Veterinary Nursing Department for more information.



European quality mark

Use the ACOVENE logo with pride

Last year, the RCVS was formally affiliated to ACOVENE, the European organisation for accrediting programmes of veterinary nurse education. This means that the College's quality-assurance mechanisms comply with those set by ACOVENE and that centres delivering RCVS-approved qualifications meet the required quality standards, and can therefore use ACOVENE badging.

This isn't an insignificant concession. ACOVENE is recognised and supported by the Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA) and the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE), both major employer organisations looking to improve standards of veterinary nursing support in the EU. Given that veterinary nursing is increasingly subject to professional regulation in Northern Europe, international recognition of UK standards of education and training is important. The ACOVENE badge of recognition provides just that.

Recognition is also important for practices wishing to employ European VNs. The definition of a veterinary nurse, and VN training, across the EU varies very widely. Some programmes offer little more than uncertificated grooming and basic animal care, whilst others are substantial undergraduate courses established within veterinary schools. ACOVENE is currently the only EU-wide measure of programme content and quality. Vets employing such nurses know that they will be able to register in the UK quickly, and without a need for the RCVS to individually evaluate their qualifications or require adaptation training.

So, use the ACOVENE badge with pride; it's a recognition of the rigour and quality of the RCVS's regulation of VN programmes. If you don't already have it, the RCVS can provide you with a copy of the logo for your literature, contact vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk.



New territories

Changes in the EV team

With the successful introduction of the new VN Diploma, and the increasing pool of centres and training practices, the need has arisen for a lead external verifier (EV) to support and head up our busy EV team. The role aims to support the EV team to provide a consistent and standard approach to all our centres (and affiliated training practices) as the award develops. Juliet Whatley took up this role in June this year.

In order to maintain objectivity and keep relationships fresh, from time to time we rotate external verifiers. Juliet's new role has led to a review of the various centres covered, which has resulted in several changes. The new territories will take full effect from 1 September 2011.

Alison Rengert

Askham Bryan College
Bottle Green Training
City & Islington College
College of West Anglia
Easton College
Edinburgh's Telford College
Hadlow College
MYF Training Ltd
Myerscough College
Myerscough Lynwood School of Veterinary Nursing
Northumbria College of Veterinary Nursing
Oaklands College
Pro-Co NW
South Staffordshire College
Writtle College

College of Animal Welfare (Leeds)
College of Animal Welfare (Potters Bar)
Halesowen College
Hartpury College
Norton Radstock College
Pershore College
Solihull College
Sparsholt College
The Open College of Equine Studies
Warwickshire College

Juliet Whatley

Barony College
Canterbury College
Chichester College
Duchy College
Greenmount College
Harper Adams University College
LITE Ltd
North Highland College
Pet Health Education (Medivet)
Plumpton College
Royal Veterinary College
University Of Bristol

New centres

We are pleased to see the amount of new interest in delivering veterinary nurse training this year. Three new colleges, Halesowen College, West Midlands, Oaklands College, St Albans, and City & Islington College, London, recently underwent the approval process. Not unusually, all institutions have some conditions to meet and, if these are addressed, will begin to enrol students in either September or January.

Reaching out

Seeking tutors with community outreach experience

The RCVS Charitable Trust would like to hear from veterinary nurse tutors who have given informal or formal talks to schools, community groups or even prisons. It plans to pilot a new scheme to encourage veterinary nurses to work with schools, especially secondary schools, to help young people to develop their understanding and empathy for animals, and the benefits of the human-animal bond.

“To formulate this project, we would really value the thoughts and experiences of those who have done this in the past, or are involved in a current project,” says Cherry Bushell, Trust Director.

Anyone interested in giving feedback or getting involved, should contact Cherry on 0207 202 0743 or c.bushell@rcvstrust.org.uk.

Golden Jubilee Grants

The pilot scheme is part of the Trust's dedicated programme in this landmark year, which aims to encourage veterinary nurses to push the boundaries of



their role and make a unique difference to animal care. The Trust has a number of initiatives, including:

- Practical support through equipment grants to accredited training centres
- A new grants programme to support practice innovation inspired by veterinary nurses
- Exploring ways to offer guidance and support to veterinary nurses to run preventative health clinics.

Slow progress logged

NPL checks show many not ready for practicals

Believe it or not, the Nursing Progress Log (NPL) has been in use for almost a year. During July, we added the 'Day-one Skills' of the mixed practice pathway to the skills list in readiness for September, and sent out the whole NPL skills list to centres for evaluation and comment. We were surprised – pleasantly so – to receive very few suggestions for amendment. The mixed practice skills will now be incorporated into the NPL software and should be online shortly, along with some other minor amendments and enhancements to make life easier.

“We are expecting fewer than anticipated exam candidates this September.”

Our monitoring of the NPL is demonstrating, in most cases, that it works well. However, we are also seeing some poor practice. In some cases, a large number of skills have been 'opened' on one day. This begs the question as to whether the clinical coach

has demonstrated and observed such a large number of skills, or simply made an assumption. We have also noticed that some coaches are failing to attend to claims for competence for many weeks, if not months. These are, of course, being investigated via the centres concerned.

Overall, progress with the NPL is somewhat slower than we expected. At the end of July, only 70 transition students had completed, and a further 200 were between 50 and 100% complete. Bearing in mind that the NPL must be completed and internally verified before a student can enter the final OSCE, we are expecting fewer than anticipated exam candidates this September.

As we go to press, the number of claims for 'competence pending' have escalated. Does this mean clinical coaches and students are leaving things to the last minute? The NPL is designed to be a learning log used throughout training. Worked on steadily, it's a valuable learning tool, but a last-minute rush to complete risks undue stress for both students and practices, and invalid claims for competence.

Going for gold

Jubilee seminar and awards celebrate half-century

On 23 June, we held a seminar to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the veterinary nursing qualification. Entitled 'Looking back, stepping forward', the event reflected on what the profession has achieved during its first 50 years – with presentations from some of those involved in the early days – and went on to consider future directions for veterinary nursing, with thought-

provoking talks by speakers from Norway, Ireland and the Royal College of Nursing. We were honoured that some of the pioneering veterinary nurses were able to attend the event, as well as those involved with taking the profession forward today.

A full report of the day is available at www.rcvs.org.uk/VNat50.

As part of the jubilee celebrations, VN Council launched a new award to recognise an exceptional contribution to veterinary nursing. Jean Turner, associate editor of the *VNJ*, was presented with the inaugural award at RCVS Day, which took place on 1 July in London.

Jean has been involved in veterinary nursing for almost as long as the training scheme has been in existence and, together with her husband Trevor, she has trained and supported veterinary nurses at their practice for many years. "Jean has spent her life contributing to veterinary nursing," said then-President Peter Jinman, at RCVS Day. "She has worked tirelessly behind the scenes and is an outstanding ambassador for the veterinary nursing profession."

A second jubilee award, for a lifetime contribution to veterinary nursing, was made to Jill Dent. VN number 17, Jill began her veterinary nursing career just after the Second World War, in the days before formal training was available. She worked in practice for many decades and joined the Register in 2007, becoming the longest-serving VN to do so. The President presented a certificate to her in recognition of her long and dedicated service to veterinary nursing.



Haver opportunity to talk to us!

Welsh venue for Q&A

The next in the series of RCVS Question Time meetings will take place on Thursday 27 October 2011, at the Wolfscastle Hotel, near Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire.

Question Time is a chance for veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons to ask the College about issues affecting the veterinary team. What's on the agenda is up to the delegates – the evening will be shaped by their questions – but likely topics for discussion include the new Codes of Professional Conduct, veterinary nurse training and disciplinary issues.



A buffet and drinks will be served at 6.30pm, and the meeting will start at 7.15pm and finish at approximately 10pm. All veterinary nurses and vets living in the local area will be sent a personal invitation, but you can also let Fiona Harcourt know if you would like to attend (f.harcourt@rcvs.org.uk).

Catch up at Congress?

Where you can find us this autumn

BVNA

If you are visiting BVNA Congress this year (7-9 October, Kettering), come and help us celebrate 50 years of veterinary nursing at the RCVS stand – share your memories of the past half-century and your hopes for the decades to come!

Also, this year saw the introduction of the disciplinary system for RVNs – if you have any questions about what this means for you or your students, then join VN Council Chairman, Liz Branscombe, who will be delivering a talk entitled '**Disciplinary hearings and the VN: the procedure and what you can do**' on Saturday 8 October, at 14.40.

Finally, we will be unveiling the new RVN badge, which will be awarded to all those who have qualified since 4 July 2011 and can be purchased by other registered veterinary nurses. Come to the stand for more details.

London Vet Show

Later in the year, we will be at the London Vet Show, on 25-26 November at Olympia. Join us for a breakfast meeting on 26 November, where we will try to answer your questions about the new Code of Professional Conduct, which should, pending the outcome of the current consultation, be nearing finalisation at that point. We will also have a team on the stand for both days of the event to answer your questions.

We look forward to seeing you there!

European perspectives

Oslo venue for Vetnet conference

If you're interested in how nursing can be taught as a science, then head to Norway for this year's Vetnet conference, which will be held in Oslo, on 29-30 September.

Hosted by the Norwegian School of Veterinary Science, the event will cover topics such as rehabilitation and pain management, along with international relations within the teaching of veterinary nursing. There will also be a tour of the school's facilities, including the training labs.

Vetnet is the European association of veterinary nurse educators and its annual conference offers a variety of workshops, which are interesting for teachers and anyone supporting training students in the workplace.

For further information and to book your place, please visit www.vetnet.com.

Meet the team

Liz Troman



What's your role?

External Verifier

What's your background?

I am a country girl and I started my working life in the equine world, qualifying as a riding instructor and working in a variety of yards involved in everything from three-day eventing to racing. I made the move to veterinary nursing in 1994 and qualified in 1996. Working in practice for the following years, I found a particular interest in training other nurses and became an assessor. It then seemed a natural progression to move into teaching, a move which also allowed me to relocate back to the country.

What do you do?

In my role as an external verifier I am part of the team responsible for the external quality assurance of the Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing. This involves visiting centres and training practices throughout the year, moderation of assessments and exams and monitoring student training.

What's been your biggest challenge?

Without a doubt the biggest challenge to date has been helping with the implementation of the Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing. However, now one year in, it is great to see the progress being made and everyone's hard work starting to pay off.

Surprise us...

Having spent several years in the Territorial Army, I am a fully qualified Combat Marksmanship Coach!

Improved coach training in view

Clinical coach training comes under scrutiny

As we draw to the close of the first academic year of the new Level 3 Diploma, we have been taking stock of the clinical coach role and how it's been working in practice. Feedback has come via quality assurance visits, internal verifier workshops and the Nursing Progress Log (NPL) itself. We are also very grateful for the useful research carried out among both clinical coaches and trainers by veterinary surgeon Chris Whipp.

How's it going? For a brand new concept, surprisingly well. Early problems with NPL functionality have now been resolved and it is evident that many clinical coaches are working steadily to help their students learn the many skills involved in veterinary nursing. However, not everything is rosy and it is very evident that quite a lot of clinical coaches don't fully understand their roles and are not able to give the best support to students. Part of this is down to training and some to time management (and prioritisation) issues in practice.

Approximately 100 clinical coaches responded to Chris Whipp's survey and it's clear that many of them (32%) felt they had too little training for the role. Worryingly, 14% also described the training as poor. Of the trainers who returned questionnaires to Chris, 10% were offering initial preparation for the clinical coach role of three hours or less. Most training lasted between three and five hours.

These findings tie in with some of the poorer practice evident in the NPL, such as 'opening' myriad skills for a student and then failing to ensure progress is made in gaining, and logging, experience, or ignoring a student's claims for competence for several weeks (in one case, months).

Improved training

What are we doing? When the clinical coach role was introduced, we intentionally didn't stipulate a formal qualification because we felt this was too redolent of

All about equine? Neigh!

Feedback from the written examinations

This summer, the Level 3 Diploma theory examinations were very busy. In total, 557 candidates sat paper 1; 572 sat paper 2; and, 724 sat paper 3.

It is clear that some students are a little confused concerning the content of the examination, which we perhaps need to clarify. The papers cover the core units of the qualification and therefore include questions relating to core veterinary nursing knowledge and skills, regardless of species. The majority of the questions are generic and do not mention species at all. A small number of questions relate to horses or small animals. In the summer examinations, these questions amounted to no more than 14% of paper 1 and 38% of paper 2. Rumours on the blog sites of the paper including 30 equine questions are vastly over exaggerated! What is clear is that many students were far from well prepared for the questions they were asked.

For the time being, students sitting paper 3 will take a paper designed for students on the transitional pathway. We appreciate that transition students will not necessarily have covered the cross-species content of the core units. With this in mind, paper 3 contains no

questions which require prior knowledge of the different species. Students are, however, expected to be taught the full content of the relevant professional syllabus units that do include a small element of cross-species content. For example, in relation to diagnostic imaging, all students should understand the implications of using radioactive isotopes, not just equine students.

“Many students were far from well prepared for the questions they were asked.”

The majority of the questions in paper 3 are generic, but there are a small number of questions that refer to a species in order to provide some context, or require a broader knowledge of subjects than the student might encounter in his or her immediate practice. For example, a question might ask how to calculate a dosage for a horse. The dose for a horse is calculated in the same way as for any other species; the point of the question is knowledge of calculation.

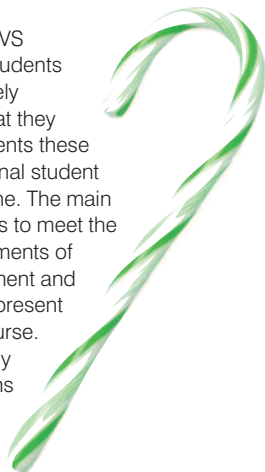
Green and stripy?

Latest in our series of exam myths

We continue our series looking at the some of the exam myths being perpetuated!

Myth: veterinary nursing students sitting their practical examination (OSCE) must wear a green stripy uniform to the examination.

Fact: when sitting the RCVS practical examinations, students should attend appropriately dressed in the uniform that they wear at work. Fewer students these days attend in the traditional student nurse uniform, which is fine. The main point of wearing uniform is to meet the health and safety requirements of work in a clinical environment and to demonstrate how you present yourself as a veterinary nurse. An external verifier recently attending the examinations expressed concern that a number of candidates wore ill-fitting uniforms, some of which were very tight. A few 'builders bums' were also on show. Is this really how students dress for work? Could it be that a 'green stripy' is being shared for the purpose of the examination?



“When attending a practical exam, students should wear the uniform they wear at work.”

Many uniforms have the practice logo embroidered on them. If they are ill-fitting, or torn and stained with hems trodden down, this doesn't provide a very good impression of the practice. The look is often completed by a pair of scruffy trainers or other inappropriate footwear.

As a guide, when attending a practical exam, students should wear the uniform they wear at work. We understand that this differs between practices and might be neither green nor stripy. Whatever is worn should be clean, in good repair and stain free. It should also allow one to move freely when handling equipment (or animals). The same considerations apply to footwear.

NVQs and their bureaucratic assessment. We still don't feel that formal NVQ-style assessor training is the answer, but we are working to improve training for clinical coaches, and therefore their understanding and ownership of this very important and responsible professional role.

“Problems with NPL functionality have now been resolved.”

This autumn we will be introducing a preparatory home-study pack for prospective clinical coaches, designed to give them an initial understanding of the role, its challenges and responsibilities, before they attend training provided by their centre. We hope the introductory reading and activities will explain, and encourage reflection on, the focus of the new role and provide a very significant improvement in their preparation. A similar package is provided prior to RCVS examiner training and has proved very successful.

Exam papers (and OSCE stations) are externally scrutinised, by a team of experienced examiners, and subjected to rigorous statistical analysis to ensure they reflect the relevant unit assessment criteria fairly. These measures also enable us to identify any questions producing suspect results and remove them from the calculation of marks. We additionally take into account information supplied to us by students on the special consideration forms.

We understand that the Level 3 Diploma examinations are new territory for candidates (and centres). However, the results show that candidates performed well despite their worries. Students now preparing for the November examinations should make sure their studies are guided by the teaching and learning guidance in the Qualification Handbook.



Who's on VNC?

The following are VN Council members for 1 July 2011 to 6 July 2012

Elected veterinary nurses

Liz Branscombe (Chairman)
Tanya Cayley
Liz Cox
Louise Glysen
Andrea Jeffery
Katherine Kissick (Vice-Chairman)
Suzanne May
Hilary Orpet

RCVS Council members

Jill Nute
Neil Smith (Vice-Chairman)
Bradley Viner

Appointed veterinary surgeons

Elizabeth Armitage-Chan
Victoria Aspinall
Richard Hooker

Lay members

Tony Birbeck
Penny Swindlehurst

Lantra representative

Chris House

Plus BVNA and BSAVA non-voting observers



New VN Council members: left to right, Elizabeth Armitage-Chan, Liz Branscombe (Chairman), Elizabeth Cox, Tanya Caley

Theory examinations (e-assessment)	
Winter 2011	
Closing date for entries	16 September
Appointment booking window	17 October – 11 November
Exam week	14 – 25 November
Results published	10 January
Spring 2012	
Closing date for entries	20 January
Appointment booking window	13 February – 9 March
Exam weeks	12 – 25 March
Results published	TBC
Summer 2012	
Closing date for entries	3 May
Appointment booking window	21 May – 15 June
Exam weeks	18 June – 1 July
Results published	TBC

Practical examinations	
Autumn 2011	
Closing date for entries	12 August
Exam weekend	16 – 18 September
Results published	20 October
Winter 2011	
Closing date for entries	4 November
Exam weekend	9 – 11 December
Results published	19 January
Spring 2012	
Closing date for entries	2 March
Exam weekend	30 March – 1 April
Results published	TBC
Summer 2012	
Closing date for entries	8 June
Exam weekend	6 – 8 July
Results published	TBC

Who does what...

Libby Earle: *Head of Veterinary Nursing*
Annette Amato: *Deputy Head of Department, Awarding Body Board Secretary, Secretary to VN Council*
Julie Dugmore: *Quality assurance and EV liaison*
Vicky Hedges: *Examinations and higher education quality assurance*
Christine James: *Centre approvals and monitoring*

Amy Woods: *Student enrolments, careers advice*
Jenny Orme: *Award certificates, registration for newly-qualified nurses*
Ben Myring: *Examinations*

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