

## You spoke: did we listen?

*Around 2,000 individuals responded to our consultation on qualifications. Find out what happened next.*

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**In this issue:** CPD audit, Trust support, fees due, approval news, appeals reminder, qualifications update, exam feedback, meet the team, events and diary dates.

# Continue the good work

## First CPD audit finds encouraging results

**Once qualified and registered, veterinary nurses now have a commitment to carry out an average of 45 hours of continuing professional development (CPD) over a three-year period. So it was encouraging to see that, according to the results of our first CPD audit, the average RVN appears to do substantially more than the minimum required amount of CPD.**

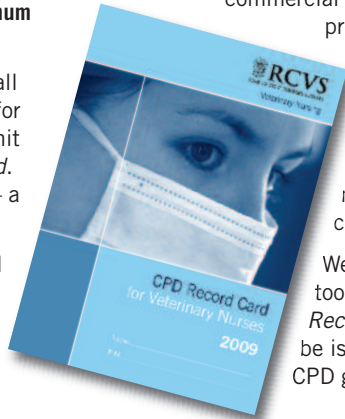
We asked 509 RVNs – 10% of all RVNs who have been qualified for more than three years – to submit a copy of their *CPD Record Card*. Cards were received from 460 – a response rate of 96%.

The RVNs responding completed an average of 23 hours of CPD in 2007, and 28 hours in 2008. The requirement was only introduced in 2007, so it

is great to see that in the first two years of obligatory CPD, the average RVN appears to be more than meeting the target.

Although RVNs have lots of options for CPD – including in-house seminars, free CPD provided by commercial companies and reading journals – CPD provided by colleges and training centres plays a key role. In fact, our 2008 Survey of the VN Profession showed that although the most common CPD carried out was distance learning and reading books and journals, the most preferred was external weekday courses and study days.

We are grateful to all those RVNs who took part in the study. The 2010 *CPD Record Cards* for both vets and RVNs will be issued in January, in the meantime, CPD guidance can be found on RCVSONline.



## Trust funds for training

Get your bids in – and you could be among the first establishments to receive funding from the RCVS Trust to buy equipment for VN training. This year, for the first time, RCVS-approved HE VN course-providers can apply for Spencer-Hill Equipment Grants. The money must be used to buy specific clinical equipment for use in teaching the treatment and care of animals to veterinary nurse students. Amounts of up to £5,000 are available and **bids must be received by the Trust by 5pm on Friday 29 January 2010**. For more information, visit [www.rcvs.org.uk/RCVSTrust](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/RCVSTrust) or call 020 7202 0714.



## Resourceful VNs

...are signing up for a free e-learning resource called WikiQuiz that has been put online thanks to £4,770 of funding from the RCVS Trust. As its name suggests, WikiQuiz is a multiple choice 'Q&A,' and it is primarily designed to help veterinary undergraduates study and revise using the material on WikiVet (a website put together by the vet schools to provide academic-quality information in a 'wikipedia-style' format). However, some of the material is also relevant to VNs – and in particular those with their sights set on advanced qualifications or wondering what to do for their CPD. For more information – and a free sign-up – log onto [www.WikiVet.net](http://www.WikiVet.net).



**PRACTICAL VENUES** As with the summer practical exams, we have again had a high number of applications for the winter exams, which are due to take place on 11-13 December. We have added an extra centre – Nottingham Trent University – but this does mean that not everyone will be accommodated in their first choice of venue. We have tried to take account of the needs of as many people as possible, and apologise for any inconvenience that this may cause.

## Candidates please

### Nomination time for VN Council elections

**H**ave you been watching the debates about VN qualifications or RVN disciplinary systems from the sidelines? Would you like to get on the pitch? We are looking for candidates to stand for election to the Veterinary Nurses Council.

There are eight elected VNs on Council and each year two places for Registered/Listed VNs come up, with those whose terms are coming to an end eligible to stand again. Those elected will take their seats on RCVS Day in July, to serve four-year terms, and will be expected to spend at least six to eight days a year attending meetings of Council, working parties and subcommittees.

All prospective candidates need to provide the signatures and registered/listed addresses of two proposers, and should also submit a short biography, manifesto and photograph for inclusion in the *RCVS News Extra* election specials. No current member of the VN Council may make nominations.

Nominations must be made in writing on the prescribed form and received by the Registrar or on before the closing date of 31 January 2010. Forms are available from [www.rcvs.org.uk/vncouncil10](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/vncouncil10) and [vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk).

We are keen to add to our pool of training expertise on the Council so do consider standing!

## Approval rating

### Full approval for Warwickshire College

**T**he Veterinary Nurses Council has confirmed that full approval status should be applied to the Coventry University BSc(Hons) Veterinary Nursing with Business Management and the Foundation Degree (FdSc) in Veterinary Nursing with Practice Management that is delivered in partnership with Warwickshire College. This means that students on these degree programmes no longer need to sit the theory or practical examinations run by the RCVS Awarding Body.

In order to achieve full approval, a university has to demonstrate rigorous assessment, including unseen examination in all modules, which addresses the RCVS Veterinary Nursing Professional Syllabus and National Occupational Standards. The RCVS has carried out audits on all aspects of these programmes since their validation in 2006. This has included attending practical assessments and sampling a range of assessment material. The module grades for all students were compared with the marks they achieved in the RCVS examinations: there was good and consistent parity between the two, which demonstrates that the university examinations are of an appropriate standard.

Other programmes which have achieved full approval are with the Universities of Bristol, Central Lancashire (with Myerscough College) and Middlesex (with the College of Animal Welfare). There are nine other universities currently working towards full approval.

## VN fees due

### Fees are frozen, but still due

**R**egistered and Listed VNs were sent their retention fee notices during October. The retention fee for 2010 is £60 and was due on 31 October 2009.

Fees will be accepted up until 31 December 2009, after which point, names will be removed from the List/Register and it will be illegal to carry out Schedule 3 activities. Why not set up a direct debit to make sure you don't forget next year? If you have not received either a reminder from the College or your new card, can you please contact us on 020 7202 0723, or [finance@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:finance@rcvs.org.uk).



# Are your students appealing?

## A refresher on our appeals process

It's always disappointing to fail an examination - even more so if something went wrong during the exam. Like all examining bodies, the RCVS has procedures in place for students in such a situation. However, many students are not clear about how this works and when they should – or shouldn't – appeal.

**T**aking a look at examination appeals first, the vast majority of appeals to us concern the examinations, and many of these are dismissed because students appeal for inappropriate reasons. The appeals system deals with situations in which the conduct of the examination has apparently been at fault. However, it doesn't cover a candidate's disagreement with the judgement of examiners, ie the candidate disagrees with the mark awarded and thinks it should have been higher.

So, what are grounds for appealing an exam result? As an awarding body, the RCVS has to ensure that its exams comply with a high standard of quality assurance. This means we have to construct and check questions (and OSCE stations) carefully so that these provide a valid and workable test of knowledge and/or skills. In addition, we need to ensure that the exams are conducted in such a way as to be fair to all candidates: in other words, the exam systems must work well and not unduly advantage, or disadvantage, some candidates in comparison with others.

However, sometimes things go wrong and a candidate may feel he or she has been disadvantaged. An example of this might be a piece of equipment malfunctioning during a practical exam, or undue noisy disturbance during a theory test. In such

cases, a candidate can appeal to us to have the result of the exam nullified, using the procedure set out in the *Candidate Handbook*.

***“We need to ensure that the exams are conducted in such a way as to be fair to all candidates: in other words, the exam systems must work well.”***

It's important to realise that exam appeals are not dealt with by the VN Department or Awarding Body staff. Any appeal goes to the Registrar's department, where it goes through a screening process conducted by individuals completely independent of the Awarding Body. If it is evident that the appellant has grounds for appeal, a panel of similarly independent people is convened and the appellant is invited to attend the appeal hearing (if he or she wishes). An appeals panel can make one of two decisions:

- The appeal is allowed and the result nullified, allowing the candidate a “clean slate” to re-sit; or,
- The appeal is dismissed.

It's important to recognise that an appeals panel has no power to change a 'fail' result into a 'pass', although they do have the ability to



refer a borderline case back to the examiners for re-consideration. However, this can only occur if there are valid grounds for appeal, ie it has been found that something went wrong with the conduct of the examination.

### Special Consideration

As you can see, the appeals process has a very specific purpose and is limited in what it can do in terms of a failed examination. There is another mechanism by which we can assist candidates in difficulties – the Special Consideration procedure. This allows candidates to notify us of any unforeseen circumstances that might have adversely affected their expected exam performance. There are two important things to note about this procedure:

- Circumstances must be recent, unforeseen and substantiated; and,
- They must be notified within seven days of attending the exam in question, ie before a result has been confirmed.

Such circumstances might include sudden bereavement, illness of a family member or other severe upset on the day of examination, for example, being involved in an accident on the way to the exam. The RCVS evaluates the circumstances and may apply a tariff of additional marks (published by the Joint Council for Qualifications). The maximum adjustment is 5% in the most serious of extenuating circumstances. Once again, the procedure for requesting Special Consideration is contained in the *Candidate Handbook*.

### Speed read

If one of your students feels he or she has been disadvantaged in an examination:

- Encourage him/her to use the Special Consideration procedure, if appropriate
- Ensure that any appeal is received by the RCVS within **28 days** of the result publication
- Ensure the student applies for Special Consideration or lodges an appeal for themselves – we cannot consider applications from partners, parents, centre or practice staff on a student's behalf
- Ensure the student understands that the appeals procedure cannot consider disagreement with the examiner's judgement about his or her performance

## It's in the ether

Please check we've received key emails

**W**e are gradually conducting more and more business by email, which is great because it's so much quicker and (mainly) more reliable than the post. However, we do sometimes have problems with emails disappearing into the ether and this can be critical if it's an exam entry. This autumn, we have had to fit eleven additional last-minute students into the OSCE exam because the centre's application email never reached us, having clearly been sent. Fortunately, we had the space; however, this might not always be the case. If you are sending us an important email, for both our peace of mind and yours, please will you:

- Request both delivery and read receipts
- Check your 'outbox' and 'sent items' folders to ensure it's actually gone

If we fail to send you a 'read receipt', please check promptly to ensure we've got it!



# Qualified proposals

## Revised proposals for the new VN qualifications

It's disappointing how often people say they "would complain to the RCVS but there is no point, as they won't listen". It's particularly distressing when this sentiment is expressed in connection with a consultation, when we are actively asking for input. So it was pleasing to find that we received over 400 responses (accounting for the views of about 2,000 individuals) to our recent consultation on veterinary nursing qualifications. And the acid test, did we listen? Read on to find out.

**A**s you know, the VN qualifications are under review: the current NVQ and VRQ qualifications will be phased out by government from summer 2010, to coincide with the introduction of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

The RCVS Awarding Body (AB) has delegated the development of the new award to a Working Party (WP). The WP held an initial consultation period to develop ideas for the new award, then issued a second, broader consultation on the resulting proposals. It met in early December to review all of the responses received and agree how the proposals might be modified to take account of those views, while still maintaining its original aims: to increase the number of people who can access VN training and reduce the burden on training practices.

***"An electronic logging system remains a key part of the assessment process, to record practice-based tuition, experience and competence."***

Although the proposals were broadly well received – practices particularly welcomed the demise of the heavy paperwork of the NVQ and felt that the model would attract more practices to train nurses – there were some concerns. These fell into several key areas: a worry about the accessibility of the new structure to employed/mature students; a feeling that there was not enough practical experience in year one; concerns about the relevance of cross-species teaching for all; the demise of separate equine training; the role of assessors and mentors; and, funding.

The latter issue is largely beyond our control – and plans have not yet been finalised by the LSC –

however, we have built our proposals to meet what we believe to be the likely funding criteria.

The other concerns were tackled in turn by the WP and key changes have been proposed to address them. These include increasing the practical experience in the first year to a minimum of 20 weeks, to be spent in any training practice – the original proposal was for five weeks.

Although most units remain generic, ie taught/applied across species to give nurses a sound knowledge base from which to specialise,



the new proposal includes 45 credits of either small animal or equine-specific nursing units in year 2 – in the previous proposal there was no distinct small animal or equine 'track'. There has been considerable pressure from the equine arm of the profession to maintain a specific equine training option, but this really is not cost-effective given the very small number opting to take this route. However, the revised proposals allow for some equine differentiation to be maintained, without it being a separately examined qualification. A large animal option could be added at a later date, if there is a demand. We are also increasing the overall credits to 180 (from 70), in order to recognise the importance of practical learning.

***“Students will require an accountable mentor in practice – who will be responsible for ensuring requisite clinical tuition and suitable experience, and for verifying competence.”***

An electronic logging system remains a key part of the assessment process, to record practice-based tuition, experience and competence. A system is currently being developed in partnership with Skillwise. This will be used by all FE students and we also hope that it will be adopted by the majority of universities. The 'Nursing Progress Log' (NPL) will be based on a series of day-one practical nursing skills, which are being identified by the Working Party, based on the National Occupational Standards and the hands-on skills needed by nurses in practice (such as monitoring patients, bandaging, taking radiographs, clinical cleaning etc).

Although Assessors will no longer exist per se, students will require an accountable mentor in practice – an experienced RVN or MRCVS – who will be responsible for ensuring requisite clinical tuition and suitable experience, and for verifying competence. It is likely that many of these mentors will be drawn from the pool of qualified Assessors, who will be very well placed to take on this role. The RCVS will also offer guidance to centres on mentorship training and development as part of its IV workshops. The NPL will be accessed and monitored by the responsible centre and by the RCVS for quality assurance purposes.

Under the revised proposals, the RCVS will still conduct examinations to ensure the rigour and standardisation of the training – including an MCQ



test for the first year and an OSCE at the end of the programme.

Centres will still have affiliated Training Practices, but will not be required to visit them as frequently – unless there is a specific need (for example, students not making expected progress, change of key practice staff, change of premises etc). TPs will have one 'key' centre for approval and ongoing quality-monitoring purposes but may also link with other centres if they wish to send students to different courses. They will have formal agreements (in relation to practical tuition and experience) with each such centre in addition to the one they have with their key centre.

The next phase is for the Working Party to start the process of developing units for the new qualification, bearing in mind that the National Occupational Standards (which are set by the Sector Skills Council LANTRA) are also under currently review.

See RCVSONline for more details in due course: [www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk)

## Speed read

Key changes to the initial proposals, in brief:

- Practical experience in first year increased from five weeks to a minimum of 20 weeks
- Practical credits increased from 70 to 180
- Choice of 45 credits of **either** small animal **or** equine-specific nursing units in year 2
- Electronic logging system now under development – can be accessed and monitored by centre and RCVS
- Accountable mentor required in practice to replace Assessor
- Centres to visit TPs less frequently

# Needling problem

## Avoiding needlestick injuries

Needlestick injuries carry major risks but seem not to be taken as seriously in veterinary practice as they are in human healthcare. *VN Standard* offers some advice, particularly for those taking OSCE examinations.

**In human healthcare, a needlestick injury carries a significant risk from blood-borne infections such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV. When a human healthcare worker sustains a needlestick injury it is therefore treated as a major incident.**

Healthcare workers are accordingly advised never to re-sheath/re-cap needles<sup>1</sup>. By comparison, the veterinary profession has a more relaxed attitude. The majority of students attending our OSCE examinations routinely re-sheath needles and several have sustained needlestick injuries as a result.

**“Ideally, needles should not be re-sheathed at any time.”**

Needlestick injuries are recognised as being common in veterinary practice and are rarely reported. The risk from blood-borne infections is currently low and most injuries are minor. However, new infectious diseases emerge from time to time and no one knows if the next will be zoonotic<sup>2</sup>. A majority of the reported injuries occur during and after the procedure and when disposing of the needle. Injury has also been reported prior to administering the medication, both before and after drawing up the medication. Compared with human medicine, there are very few studies into the effects of needlestick injuries to veterinary personnel. One study, by Wilkins and Bowman<sup>3</sup>, reported adverse reactions, including:

- Local inflammation
- Abscess formation
- Joint infection
- Localised necrosis
- Skin slough
- Local nerve damage
- Anaphylaxis
- One case of miscarriage

There can be enough medicine on, or in, a needle to cause a severe, or even life-threatening, reaction. The main substances of concern are anthelmintics, antibiotics, anaesthetics, steroids and mineral oil-based vaccines. Needles can also

introduce bacteria into the puncture wound. The contamination usually comes from the skin or hair of the patient or veterinary staff<sup>2</sup>.

Re-sheathing a needle is reported by Scott, Weese and Jack<sup>2</sup> as being high risk. Injuries usually occur when missing the cap or pushing the needle through the cap and puncturing the skin. It is not only hands which sustain injury: puncture wounds have been reported to the tongue and eye (presumably while the cap was being held in the mouth).

Needlestick injuries are preventable through good working practice and the use of safety devices, such as retractable needles and needle guards; however, as these are more expensive than regular needles, they are rarely seen in veterinary practice. Ideally, the drug should be drawn up in the vicinity of the patient, administered, and the needle and syringe disposed of immediately - all without re-sheathing. If this is not possible, safety devices should be used. In some cases, it may also be appropriate to change the needle after withdrawing from the vial. This means that the needle being used for the patient remains sharp.

We have assessed the risk of all OSCE tasks involving the use of hypodermic needles. Ideally, needles should not be re-sheathed at any time. Where candidates wish to re-sheath, this must be carried out using the personal protective equipment (PPE) provided, as advised by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)<sup>1</sup>. Examples include:

- Holding the cap with forceps so the needle cannot puncture the finger;
- Laying the cap on a flat surface and, with one hand holding the syringe, using the needle to scoop up the cap. Once the cap covers the needle, the other hand can be used to secure it in place; and,
- Using a device to steady the cap vertically.

Employers need to be aware of the occupational hazard and carry out an assessment to ensure that the risk is minimised. All veterinary practices





should have a policy and procedure for the safe handling and disposal of needles and syringes, and this must be communicated to all staff.

The HSE<sup>1</sup> reminds employers that they have an obligation to ensure that they keep up to date with new devices and assess their suitability for the workplace.

If, after taking these measures, a member of staff is subjected to a needlestick injury that results in an adverse reaction to a drug, this should be reported to the UK Suspected Adverse Reaction Surveillance Scheme (SARSS). The injury may also be reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR), if time has been taken off of work due to the injury.

Failure to regard the safety of others carries a real risk of litigation. Recently, a veterinary practice was successfully sued by a young client who sustained a needlestick whilst being asked to restrain a patient. She received substantial damages for the psychological trauma.

## References

1. Health and Safety Executive (undated) *Needlestick Injuries*. Available from [www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/needlesticks/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/needlesticks/)
2. Scott Weese J & Jack DC (2008): Needlestick injuries in veterinary medicine, *The Canadian Veterinary Journal*, 49 (8) pp 780-784
3. Wilkins JR & Bowman ME (1997): Needlestick injuries among female veterinarians: frequency, syringe contents and side-effects, *Occupational Medicine*, 47 (8) pp 451-457

# Tall tales

## Right, or not quite?

We continue our series that looks at some of the urban myths inspired by the practical exams.

### Speakeasy

**Myth:** if I tell the examiner how I would perform the task, I can gain the marks.

**Fact:** we often receive appeals from students saying that they told the examiner how they would perform the task and they were marked as not achieving the criteria. The OSCE examination is a practical examination and therefore students must demonstrate the task to the examiner. Some candidates like to talk throughout the task. Those who prefer this style should remember that they are being assessed for their practical competency and should not stop what they are doing to explain something, because it may slow them down.

## “Attending revision courses is a useful way of preparing for examinations, but...”

### Tactical revision?

**Myth:** attending a revision course run by an RCVS examiner will give me better chance of success.

**Fact:** during August and September, 88 RCVS OSCE examiners attended annual examiner standardisation. The sessions involved a general update for all examiners, and examiners were then standardised in specific task areas. These examiners are only permitted to examine the task areas in which they have been standardised. It is unlikely that any revision course will be run by staff who have attended all of the subject specific standardisation sessions and therefore they may not have knowledge of all the task areas. Examiners are also bound by a confidentiality agreement which they sign annually. This prevents them from divulging unpublished details about the examination. Attending revision courses is a useful way of preparing for examinations but students should be aware that attending sessions run by RCVS examiners will not necessarily give them an advantage.

# Meet the Awarding Body team



**Ben Myring**

**What's your role?**  
Examinations Secretary

**What's your background?**  
I graduated with a degree in Politics and History from the University of Durham in 2004. After a brief stint 'giving something back' by

working in a care home in my home town of Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, I was employed by the Law Society for two years in a number of administrative and customer-facing roles.

I moved to London in 2006 and, exchanging regulation of the legal profession for regulation of the veterinary profession, joined the VN Department at the RCVS as Examinations Secretary.

**What do you do?**

My role involves processing applications for the VN

NVQ and VRQ examinations, along with associated correspondence, timetabling and issuing of results. In addition, I process candidates' special consideration and reasonable adjustment applications, and deal with queries from overseas VNs seeking to register in the UK.

**What's been your biggest challenge?**

There have been a lot of changes to the VN examinations over the last two years, for example, moving from two sittings a year to a rolling schedule of three theory exams and four practical exams. Fortunately, the time that it takes to process exam applications has been greatly reduced by the move to electronic applications compiled by VNACs.

The introduction of e-testing has also been quite challenging, but it has been great to receive such positive feedback from candidates and course providers.

**Surprise us...**

I play blues and folk harmonica in a North London bar band.

## RCVS at Congress – take note!

### BVNA and the London Vet Show

**M**any thanks to all those of you who visited us at BVNA Congress in Kettering in October. We had a busy time – especially with people asking questions about the development of the new qualifications (see pages 6 and 7 if you have not already done so!), requesting CPD Cards and asking questions about the introduction of the disciplinary process for Registered Veterinary Nurses.

Liz Branscombe, VN Council Chairman, gave a well-received talk on the RVN complaints and disciplinary system, which will be introduced towards the end of next year. It's the final piece in the regulatory jigsaw for RVNs, together with completing mandatory CPD and following the *Guide to Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses*, taking

them towards full professional status. As the promotional notebooks we handed out at Congress said - *RVNs are professionals: take note!*

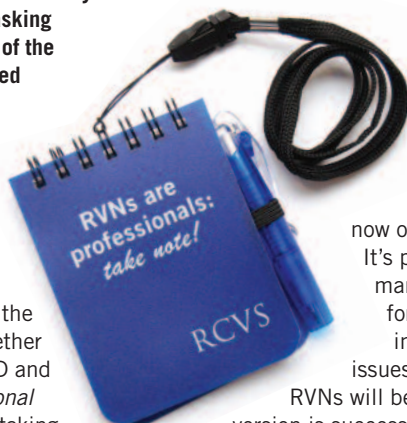
We also welcomed VNs to the stand at the London Vet Show on 6-7 November, where the qualifications review remained a hot topic.

We launched a quiz on the *Guide to Professional Conduct for Veterinary*

*Surgeons* at the event, which is now online ([www.rcvs.org.uk/guidequiz](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/guidequiz)).

It's primarily aimed at vets, although many of the questions are relevant for RVNs too, so could play a role in training on ethical and related issues. A version specifically for

RVNs will be considered next year, if the vet version is successful.



# Here's one I made earlier...

## Blue Peter inspires props for OSCE testing

**T**he Pan-European Practical Assessment System (PEPAS) for veterinary nurses is completing its training phase. The project, which has Leonardo da Vinci funding, involves eight countries being trained to examine Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs). The new examination is based upon the UK model and we have therefore been carrying out the training. The final of the three examiner training events occurred in Slovenia in October. Julie Dugmore, RCVS Awarding Body Quality Assurance Manager, and Victoria Hedges,

VN Exam and Higher Education Quality Manager, carried out the final training attended by veterinary nurse educators from Denmark, Belgium and Slovenia.

The Slovenian educator team was headed up by Bogdan Zdovc, who excelled himself by developing realistic usable models including udders and a dog which could be used for entrotacheal tube placement. If you looked closely, they were underpinned with a washing-up bottle and sticky-back-plastic arrangement that would have made Blue Peter proud!



### Testing, testing

The event followed on from previous sessions in Denmark and the Republic of Ireland. The project is now entering its testing phase, where the participating countries will translate the tasks into their national language and pilot the new-style examination with their students. So far, 50 new OSCE tasks have been developed: the aim is to reach 100 by the end of the project.

We will shortly commence testing the tasks that are relevant to the LANTRA National Occupational Standards with the intention of increasing our own task bank. The tasks developed for the project so far can be found online at [www.pepas.net](http://www.pepas.net).

# Olá Portugal!

## RCVS lecturers at first Portuguese VN conference

**I**n October, our Head of Veterinary Nursing Libby Earle and VN Exam and Higher Education Quality Manager Victoria Hedges were invited to speak at the inaugural Portuguese Veterinary Nurses Conference hosted by Instituto Politécnico de Viseu Portugal. The two-day conference was well attended by over 300 nurses, including students attending the five Portuguese veterinary nurse degree programmes.

The focus of the conference was nutrition and dentistry, with speakers from Portugal and elsewhere in Europe. Libby gave an overview of the UK nursing system, which generated some interest in working in the UK.

Victoria gave a short presentation on hand hygiene, using the World Health Organisation method used in the RCVS OSCE examinations (see *VN Standard* April 2009).

The Portuguese veterinary nursing programme has only been running for five years – it's a three-year programme at degree level so has only recently yielded graduates. Due to the infancy of the qualification, most of the lectures were delivered by veterinary surgeons. However, it was especially good to see one presentation made by a Portuguese veterinary nurse graduate - hopefully this will have inspired many in the audience to speak at future events.

# How are you feeling?

## VN survey, January 2010

**W**atch your post in January, as we are issuing the latest in our *Survey of the VN Profession* questionnaires. The last one was only in 2008, but we are bringing our vet and VN surveys into line, so the VN one has come around a bit more quickly this time.

As usual, the questionnaire asks questions about how you are using your qualification, where and how you work and your views about the profession. For the first time, we are also asking about wellbeing – using an externally-validated and recognised set of questions – to help benchmark where the profession is now and work out if there are issues to be addressed. The information we

gather is all anonymous and helps us make evidence-based policy and training decisions, so please do help us by completing your form.



### Written examinations (e-assessment)

	Winter 2009	Spring 2010	Summer 2010	Winter 2010
Award registration deadline			7 January	10 May
Closing date for entries		22 January	7 May	10 September
Appointment booking window		22 February – 19 March	7 June – 2 July	18 October – 12 November
Exam week(s)		22 – 27 March	5 – 17 July	15 – 20 November
Results published	7 January 2010	22 April	26 August	January 2011 Dates TBC

### Practical examinations

	Winter 2009	Spring 2010	Summer 2010	Autumn 2010	Winter 2010
Closing date for entries		5 February	14 May	13 August	5 November
Exam weekend		19 – 21 March	18 – 20 June	17 – 19 September	10 – 12 December
Results published	21 January 2010	29 April	29 July	21 October	January 2011 Dates TBC

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#### Who does what...

Libby Earle

*Head of Veterinary Nursing*

Annette Amato

*Deputy Head of Department,  
Awarding Body Management  
Board Secretary*

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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