PSP Handbook

Guidance for veterinary nurses undertaking a Period of Supervised Practice

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PSP Handbook

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Returning to the Register of Veterinary Nurses: A quick guide

Introduction

1. In 2007 the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons opened a new register for veterinary nurses. The Register marked a significant step forward as it was the first step towards statutory regulation for veterinary nurses. All VNs who joined the RCVS since 1 January 2003 either transferred automatically from the List to the Register in 2007, transferred voluntarily or were automatically transferred on the 17 February 2015 when the new Royal Charter came into effect, and the unregulated List of veterinary nurses was officially closed.

2. As a registered veterinary nurse (RVN) you are obliged to adhere to the *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses*) and this, in turn, requires you to maintain your competence through appropriate continuing professional development (CPD).

3. The RCVS recognises that veterinary nurses returning to the Register after a significant career break may not have been in a position to maintain their knowledge and skills. Whilst you may be a very experienced nurse, returning to a busy clinical environment after a break can be daunting.

4. We are also aware that some students, on completion of their qualification, for various reasons, do not apply to enter the Register for many years.

5. It is for these reasons that we introduced the Period of Supervised Practice (PSP) for nurses who have not been in active practice for five years or more.

6. The RCVS Academy Nurse Return course supports veterinary nurses joining or returning to the register after a break. This course is mandatory for anyone required to complete a Period of Supervised Practice. When you enrol for the PSP you will be provided with a link to the RCVS Academy where you will access the course which will guide you through the process of updating your skills, including planning and completing your PSP. This course must be completed alongside your PSP.

7. This PSP handbook provides all the information you require, from understanding what PSP is, to enrolling and being supported through to completion. It also contains information for your practice.

8. We would like to take this opportunity to welcome you back to clinical practice and to the Register of Veterinary Nurses in due course.

What is the Period of Supervised Practice (PSP)?

9. The PSP is time spent by a nurse in clinical veterinary practice in order to refresh their RCVS Day One Skills before rejoining the Register. During the PSP you will work with a named mentor (an experienced RVN or vet) in order to update your knowledge and skills and re-gain your confidence to work as a fully registered VN. Your PSP must take place over a minimum of 17 full-time weeks or the part-time equivalent i.e. at least 595 hours.

10. A PSP should normally take place within an RCVS-approved training practice (TP) or Auxiliary training practice (aTP) or a practice approved at general practice or hospital standard under the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme. If your practice does not have TP or PSS approval this does not necessarily preclude you from undertaking your PSP, but you should contact the RCVS for advice. Please email vnpsp@rcvs.org.uk

11. Once you have enrolled for your PSP, you must normally complete this within one year.

What is the PSP for?

12. Perhaps it is important to first say what the PSP is not! It isn't re-training; You are not undertaking a pre-registration qualification and you are not expected to be formally re-assessed.

13. The PSP is in place to ensure you have the opportunity to update your knowledge and skills under the mentorship and supervision of other registered practitioners (veterinary or veterinary nursing) before you re-join or in the case of those not previously registered, join the Register and become a fully accountable professional.

14. You may think it strange that we do not require you to be formally assessed or re-examined. This is because you will be bound by the *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses* as soon as you join or re-join the Register. It is therefore up to you to ensure that you have the requisite and up-to-date knowledge and skills for the areas of work you will be undertaking as a Registered Veterinary Nurse. In other words, you are trusted, as a professional practitioner, to ensure you are competent.

Enrolling for the PSP

15. In order to commence your PSP you must be enrolled in the PSP section of the RCVS database. This is important for two reasons; first your enrolment will entitle you to undertake the full range of veterinary work regulated by the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (Schedule 3). This means that you will be able to undertake a full range of nursing work, including the administration of any medical treatment or carrying out minor surgery, not involving entry into a body cavity. Second, the RCVS must be notified of your PSP in order for it to "count". Unless you have enrolled for the PSP and your record has been activated, you will not be able to join or re-join the Register of Veterinary Nurses.

16. You need not be in paid employment to complete your PSP, although it is more likely that you will be. Your practice principal must confirm their support for your PSP and nominate an experienced RVN or vet to act as your mentor throughout. Your PSP mentor will work with you to plan your learning and help you to organise suitable experience and updating. At the end of your PSP your mentor will confirm completion and provide a professional reference so that you may apply to join the Register.

RCVS Academy - Nurse Return course

17. When you have enrolled for the PSP, you will be provided with a link to the RCVS Academy where you will be able to access the Nurse Return course which has been designed to assist nurses returning to practice after a break and is mandatory for those undertaking a PSP. The course is not intended to provide information on how to undertake specific clinical skills, but to guide you through the process of determining which skills you need to update. You will need to access the course within a month of your enrolment, but the sooner, the better.

18. You will submit all your completed PSP documents via the Nurse Return course.

Can I undertake delegated Schedule 3 activities during the PSP?

19. Yes, the whole point of the PSP is to ensure that you can regain confidence and skills across a range of veterinary nursing work, including procedures regulated under the Veterinary Surgeons Act. During your PSP you will work under the regulations that are in place for student veterinary nurses i.e. you will be working under the direction and supervision of your employing veterinary surgeon.

20. You and your employer should familiarise yourselves with the section of Schedule 3 that deals with student veterinary nurses so that you both understand how you may work. This is especially important if you are working in a practice which is not a VN training practice (TP or aTP) and may not be familiar with this part of the Veterinary Surgeons Act. https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/advice-on-schedule-3/

Your PSP mentor

21. While undertaking the PSP you must work under the supervision of a named Registered Veterinary Nurse or a veterinary surgeon (MRCVS) on the home practising part of the Register. This person will take overall responsibility for your PSP and will sign a Declaration of Completion to enable you to join the Register.

22. Your PSP mentor will help you evaluate your strengths and weaknesses in clinical practice and to identify a suitable action plan to update and develop you. They will ensure that you have adequate teaching and supervision. You will find detailed information on developing your action plan within the Academy course.

23. PSP mentors must be:
    - Registered veterinary nurses

    or

    Registered (home practising) veterinary surgeons (MRCVS)
    - Experienced practitioners, normally with at least two years of post-qualification experience.

Will my PSP be assessed?

24. Yes, but not in the formal way that student veterinary nurses are assessed. The PSP provides opportunity for refreshment and development but is not re-training. You will, with the help of your mentor and colleagues, be expected to identify your own learning needs and create a learning and development plan taking into account the type of work you will undertake once on the Register. Guidance is provided in the RCVS Academy Nurse Return course.

25. The Academy course contains a clinical skills self evaluation tool and various activities as an aid to identifying gaps in your nursing knowledge and practical skills. You will be able to download this and an action plan template when you are logged in to the Academy course, where you will find full information. You will need to keep a record of your PSP development plan and of the activities undertaken to achieve it. You will be expected to upload your self-evaluation and Action plan, through the Nurse Return course, within one month of enrolment, You and your mentor will need to review and evaluate your progress against your PSP Action plan regularly, at least once a month. Once the PSP has been completed and you feel ready (competent and confident) to Register, both you and your PSP mentor sign a declaration to that effect.

Are there any courses I can do to help with the PSP?

26. There is a range of clinical courses on offer, however undertaking clinical courses is not mandatory and you should reflect on your particular needs as identified in your action plan before deciding whether to invest in a clinical course.

Commencing a PSP

Who needs to undertake a PSP?

27. Any veterinary nurse who has previously been included in the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses (or formerly, the List of Veterinary Nurses) and who has been de-registered for a period of five years or more must undertake a period of supervised practice.

28. Any person who has achieved a UK veterinary nurse qualification but has not applied to register within five years of achieving their qualification must also undertake a period of supervised practice before they can apply to register.

29. Nurses who have had a shorter break from the Register are not required to undertake a PSP before renewing their registration, however they should ensure that their skills are up-to-date. If you are in this situation, you may find it helpful to access the RCVS Academy Nurse Return course. Although this is mandatory for those carrying out a PSP, it is intended to be helpful to any veterinary nurse returning to clinical practice after a break, and you may wish to use the self-evaluation tool and guidance to develop your own action plan.

Where a PSP can be undertaken

30. While undertaking the PSP you will need access to a caseload and resources that will enable you to update your core clinical knowledge and skills. For this reason the RCVS stipulates that the PSP must normally take place within a Training Practice (TP) or a Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) general practice or hospital standard accredited practice.

31. Non-accredited practices may be able to support you provided that they can offer the requisite levels of experience and support, either wholly at the practice or via a combination of employment in the practice concerned and some visits/placements to other practices. If you are working in a practice that is not either a TP or a PSS-accredited practice, please contact the RCVS for advice. vnpsp@rcvs.org.uk

Enrolment application process

32. Once you have returned to work in a veterinary practice you should contact the RCVS in order to enrol on to the PSP. You will be asked to complete an application form and provide your up-to-date contact details, and proof of your identity to vnpsp@rcvs.org.uk. Your PSP mentor and Practice Principal will need to give their agreement to support you and sign your enrolment form. The PSP enrolment form is included within this handbook (Appendix) . Once your details have been checked, you will be sent details of how to pay the fee (the current PSP enrolment fee can be found at https://www.rcvs.org.uk/how-we-work/fees/#nurses

33. When you have paid the fee, you will be enrolled for the PSP and notified of your start date. You will also be provided with the link to the RCVS Academy in order to access and complete the Nurse Return course. You must register for the course within one month of your PSP enrolment date. You will need to consider which areas of your knowledge and skills need to be refreshed in order for you to be able to practise safely and effectively, and the Nurse Return course will help you to identify these areas.

Professional accountability

34. During your PSP you are not a fully registered veterinary nurse and will be working under the legal (Schedule 3) provisions in place for student veterinary nurses. This means that your supervising veterinary surgeons and registered veterinary nurses assume professional accountability for the work delegated by them to you. However, you must adhere to the *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses* throughout your PSP. The Code can be accessed on the RCVS website http://www.rcvs.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-nurses/. You should make sure you are familiar with its provisions. You should not be described as a registered veterinary nurse or veterinary nurse by the practice during your PSP, as these titles are only for those who are fully registered. The title "Veterinary Nursing Assistant" or "Veterinary Care Assistant" could be used.

35. If you are asked to undertake work that you do not yet feel confident to carry out, you must tell the vet or veterinary nurse who is delegating the task(s) to you. You must only work within your personal competence, and within the law, as set out in the *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses*. You should ask for direct supervision if you don't feel ready to undertake an area of work independently.

Applying to join the Register

36. When you have completed your PSP action plan and you and your PSP mentor are satisfied that you are ready to join the Register, you and your mentor should complete the Declaration of Completion and submit it, along with your final action plan, via the Nurse Return course We will confirm when your PSP has been signed off, and if you have previously been registered, we will forward you the Register restoration form. Your restoration to the Register will normally be processed within three working days from receipt of the form, payment and any other required documents. If you have not previously been registered, your details will be sent to the registration department so that you may be invited to apply to Register. Initial registration applications may take up to four weeks to process.

37. Remember that the PSP is flexible; whilst you must undertake at least 17 weeks (595 hours), if you do not feel ready to assume the full responsibilities of a RVN at this point you can, in consultation with your employer, opt to extend your PSP until you have fully addressed your action plan.

38. If you are working part-time, you may find it helpful to keep a spreadsheet of your hours worked.

Information for employing practices

Use of title "veterinary nurse"

39. Following the introduction of the new Royal Charter in 2015, the Codes of Professional Conduct for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses were updated to strengthen guidance on the use of the title "veterinary nurse": Para 3.5 of the veterinary surgeons' code of conduct includes the guidance: "Veterinary surgeons must not hold out themselves or others as specialists or advanced practitioners unless appropriately listed with the RCVS, or as veterinary nurses unless appropriately registered with the RCVS".

40. This means that only Registered Veterinary Nurses should be described as veterinary nurses and only they should use the post-nominal letters RVN. There is no VN postnominal.

41. In this document, "PSP nurse" has been used to describe those undertaking the PSP. However, in the practice and on the practice website titles which could be used are "Veterinary Nursing Assistant" or "Veterinary Care Assistant".

Which nurses need to undertake a PSP?

42. The Period of Supervised Practice is mandatory for those veterinary nurses returning to, or in the case of those not previously registered, joining the Register. It provides the opportunity to update their professional knowledge and skills as set out in the introductory section of this handbook.

Status and supervision of PSP nurses

43. The PSP takes place over a minimum of full-time 17 weeks (595 hours) or the equivalent part-time employment. During this time the returning nurse will enrol with the RCVS as a "PSP nurse". This means that they will be regarded, for legal purposes, as a student and will not assume the full professional obligations of a registered veterinary nurse. The reason for this limited enrolment is to permit the nurse to undertake a full range of veterinary nursing work, including delegated "Schedule 3" activities under veterinary direction and supervision. Practices taking on a PSP nurse on a voluntary basis should check with their insurer regarding professional indemnity cover.

44. The definition of "supervision" and how this applies to PSP nurses can be found in the *Code of Professional Conduct* Guidance Note 18, http://www.rcvs.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-surgeons/supporting-guidance/delegation-to-veterinary-nurses/ and paragraph 7 of Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act that applies to the work of student veterinary nurses. In essence this means that PSP nurses must have ready access to a veterinary surgeon who is present on the premises and able to respond to a request for assistance if needed. If a PSP nurse undertakes a minor surgical procedure the level of supervision must be 'direct and continuous supervision', which means that the veterinary surgeon is present and giving the nurse their undivided personal attention.

Facilities and resources

45. Whilst PSP nurses are not student veterinary nurses and do not need pre-qualification practical assessment, they do need access to a caseload and resources that will enable them to update their core knowledge and skills. For this reason, we stipulate that the PSP must normally take place within a Training Practice (TP) or a Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) general practice or

hospital standard accredited practice. However, this does not preclude other practices from supporting a PSP nurse provided that they can offer the requisite levels of experience and support, either wholly at the practice or via a combination of employment with you and some visits/placements to other practices. If you are considering the employment (paid or otherwise) of a PSP nurse and your practice is not a TP or PSS-accredited at the required level, please contact the RCVS for advice.

46. You should consider the potential impact of supporting a PSP nurse. They will not need the same levels of support and assessment as a student VN but nonetheless will need mentorship and supervision during the PSP. You will need to be sure that your practice team can support this, and take into consideration any other people, such as student veterinary nurses and veterinary students that may also need support.

47. All PSP nurses must complete the Nurse Return course available on the RCVS Academy. It can also be accessed by all RVNs. Those acting as a mentor may find it useful to review the course, in particular Module 2 which covers working with a mentor.

Providing a PSP mentor

48. All PSP nurses must have access to a mentor who is a registered veterinary nurse or a registered (home practising) veterinary surgeon. The PSP mentor will work with the PSP nurse to identify the skills and knowledge that need updating and the ways in which this can be achieved. They will monitor the PSP action plan through regular progress reviews and, once the nurse is ready to join the Register, will sign a declaration of PSP completion.

49. PSP nurses do not require formal assessment and the PSP mentor does not need to be a qualified assessor. Ultimately PSP nurses self-certify that they are in a position to undertake the responsibilities and obligations of a registered practitioner. The role of the PSP mentor is to guide and support them to reach this position.

50. Mentors should be able to help the nurse to identify weaknesses or gaps in their skills and suggest and support ways in which these may be addressed. It will therefore be very helpful for a PSP mentor to be familiar with the “day one” standards of knowledge and skill expected of a registered VN. These are set out in the RCVS Day One Competences and Skills and Professional Behaviours for Veterinary Nurses. These can be accessed on the RCVS website: https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/accrediting-primary-qualifications/accrediting-veterinary-nursing-qualifications/rcvs-day-one-competences-skills-and-professional-behaviours-for/

51. The self-evaluation tool that PSP nurses work to is based on the Day One Skills for Veterinary Nurses.

52. Mentors should be willing, and have the time, to monitor a nurse’s progress and offer ongoing support. Given the level of responsibility required, a PSP mentor should be an experienced practitioner and in a position to command the confidence of the PSP nurse.

Completing the PSP

53. A Period of Supervised Practice must take a minimum of 17 full-time weeks (or the part-time equivalent). However, in some cases it may take longer for a nurse to feel confident to join the Register. The PSP mentor and the returning nurse should undertake regular and scheduled (at least once a month) reviews of progress and document these. If it appears that a nurse may need a longer period of supervision this, and the reasons for it, should be readily apparent to the employing practice (and to the RCVS) from these progress records.

54. The PSP mentor and nurse will be required to sign a declaration of completion, and to submit the self-evaluation document and the completed action plan, when the period of supervised practice has been completed and the nurse is ready to apply to join the Register. These documents will be submitted via the Nurse Return course.

Appendices

PSP forms:

1. PSP application form
2. Self-evaluation tool
3. Action plan
4. Completion declaration

Application to enrol for a Period of Supervised Practice (PSP)

Please write in block capitals using black ink

Personal details

Surname: .....

Title: (Mr, Miss, Mrs, Ms, other) .....

All forenames: .....

Date of birth: .....

Address for contact purposes: .....

.....

.....

Post code:.....

Daytime contact telephone number: Home/Work (please delete):.....

Email address: .....

Registration status

Are you:

A. A qualified veterinary nurse previously on the Register or List of Veterinary Nurses ☐

B. A qualified veterinary nurse holding an accredited UK qualification seeking to register with the RCVS for the first time ☐

If you were previously registered as a qualified veterinary nurse with the RCVS:

C. Please give your registration number*: .....

D. When were you last registered (year)? .....

** If you are unsure of your RCVS number, please contact the veterinary nursing department on 0207 202 0788*

Security

To verify your identity please provide a scan of the **identifying page of your valid passport** or EU ID card.

If you have changed your name since last registered/enrolled with the RCVS, please provide a scan of your marriage certificate/proof of name change,

Please contact the veterinary nursing department on 0207 202 0788 or vnpsp@rcvs.org.uk if you need assistance or advice

Employment

Name of veterinary practice at which you are currently employed/working in a voluntary capacity: .....

Date of commencement at practice:

dd	Mm	yy

Training practice (TP) number: (if applicable) 8 __ __ __ __ __ __

Section 2

Application to enrol for a Period of Supervised Practice

1. I hereby apply to be enrolled for a Period of Supervised Practice.

2. I understand that, during the Period of Supervised Practice, I must work under the direction and supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon or a registered veterinary nurse in accordance with the provisions for student veterinary nurses under Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966.

3. I understand that enrolment for the PSP does not entitle me to use the title "Veterinary Nurse" or "Registered Veterinary Nurse" or the post-nominal letters "VN" or "RVN". I will use the title Veterinary Nursing Assistant/Veterinary Nursing Auxiliary or other similar titles.

4. I agree to abide by the *Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses* (including updates) published by the RCVS from time to time.

Signed: ..... Date: .....

Please email your scanned PSP application form together with your scanned valid passport and any relevant change of name details to vnpsp@rcvs.org.uk

Payment – the PSP registration fee is £109.00 (until 31 October 2027).

Once your form has been checked and the details verified, we will email you with information on how the payment should be made.

Please do not attempt to post the documents to the RCVS, or to make payment until your details have been checked and you have been given a payment reference and details.

If you have any difficulties in completing the application form, or any queries relating to the PSP, please contact the RCVS VN team on 0207 202 0788 or email: vnpsp@rcvs.org.uk

Section 3

Declaration of Practice Principal

I hereby support this application for a Period of Supervised Practice and agree to provide supervision and mentorship for the applicant

Name of Applicant: ……..

I confirm that they are employed/working in a voluntary capacity at the practice indicated in section 1 iv. of this application.

I agree to ensure the applicant will:

i. Spend the greater part of their time on varied veterinary nursing work directly relevant to their registration as a veterinary nurse.

ii Be given regular planned and documented meetings (at least once per month) with their mentor for the purposes of planning, reviewing and updating their action plan,

iii Be provided with day to day supervision of their work as a returning nurse both in relation to refreshing their RCVS Day One Skills and Day One Competences and Professional Behaviours for Veterinary Nurses, and in accordance with the requirements of Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act.

iv. I understand that the applicant must not use the title "Veterinary Nurse" or "Registered Veterinary Nurse" or the post-nominal letters "VN" or "RVN". They will use the title Veterinary Nursing Assistant/Veterinary Nursing Auxiliary or other similar titles.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name (*print)* ..... Principal

Name of Practice: ..... TP Number: (if applicable) 8 __ __ __ __ __ __

Address of practice: Practice stamp:

.....

.....

.....

Section 4

Mentor

Name (*print)* ..... Date: .....

RCVS Reference No ..... Signature:

Please do not post your application to us. This should be scanned and sent by email to vnpsp@rcvs.org.uk

If you have any difficulties in completing the application form, or any queries relating to the PSP, please contact the RCVS VN team on 0207 202 0788 or email: vnpsp@rcvs.org.uk


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