



Time to pass the baton

*We answer your questions on
the divestment of RCVS Awards*



In this issue: new CEO appointed, online CPD record, Trust grant news, Code reminder, Vectar progress report, new colleges, Meet the Team, RCVS Day, RCVS Awards update, events, NPL and exam myths, exam feedback, Council news.

New Chief Executive appointed

Nick Stace to take up role in September

Nick Stace has been appointed RCVS Chief Executive and Secretary, and will take up his post on 3 September 2012.

Nick leaves CHOICE, Australia's equivalent of consumer group Which?, after three and a half years as Chief Executive Officer. At CHOICE, he led the modernisation of the organisation, this year taking it to the number one spot as the most trusted media entity in Australia. A long-standing consumer champion, Nick also held the post of Deputy CEO at Which?, was a director at Consumers' International and former Prime Minister Gordon Brown's Director of Strategic Communications.

The role of Chief Executive and Secretary is a new one – previously the Registrar led the executive of the College. RCVS Council has also instigated a second new role, that of Head of Legal Services and Registrar, for which recruitment is currently underway.



Change the record!

New online CPD recording tool available

All registered veterinary nurses are required to carry out an average of 45 hours of continuing professional development (CPD) over a three-year period. This doesn't just mean those who are working in clinical practice, but anyone who is using their nursing qualification in their role should be keeping their relevant skills and knowledge up to date.

It's not just a question of attending some conferences and snoozing at the back of a lecture theatre, either. It's important to develop a structured personal learning plan that takes account of gaps in your skills and knowledge base – and to reflect regularly on what has been learned.

A new free online tool from the RCVS – the **Professional Development Record (PDR)** – makes planning, recording and evaluating your CPD easier.

The main pages on the online record are similar in format to the paper CPD Record Cards, and are the only parts of the PDR that the RCVS can see without asking you. Here, you can record individual entries for each CPD activity, and you can also add notes and upload documents (which cannot be

accessed without your permission). This can be used, for example, to keep material from courses together, or store academic papers alongside notes on an interesting case.

Extra features include a separate section for planning CPD, including setting objectives, defining criteria for success, and noting the actions you plan to take – along with a diary for setting reminders.

A number of new headings for CPD activities have been added, such as taking part in a webinar, or undertaking a secondment. CPD entries can be sorted by type, date, where undertaken or subject, so you can see how much time you allocate to different topics or types of CPD. A progress bar shows you how much CPD has been recorded across a rolling three-year period, and turns from red to green once targets have been met.

Using the online system is not compulsory and hard copy CPD Record Cards can still be used.

The PDR for VNs can be accessed at www.vnpdr.org.uk, meanwhile, a version for veterinary surgeons can be found at www.rcvs-pdr.org.uk.



Crash test dummy Follow the Code

Trust grant for mannequin

Each year, the RCVS Charitable Trust provides funding for VN training establishments seeking to purchase equipment, under its Spencer Hill Equipment Grant.

This year, City and Islington College, North London, was granted just under £1,500 to spend on a K9 CPR dog mannequin, to support its Level 3 Diploma students.

The College was given provisional approval by the RCVS in January of this year, so the grant has been a welcome boost, as Dawn Platten (pictured, left, with Stacey Clarke, trainee technician), City and Islington Course Manager for Veterinary Nursing, explains:

"We purchased state of the art equipment when we set up our new practical facility, and it is great that we can now complement this with the new K9 CPR 'Jerry' mannequin, through the generous support of the Trust.

"This dog model has working lungs and an artificial pulse, to teach students mouth-to-snout resuscitation. It allows students to learn how to deal with a patient who has stopped breathing and whose heart has stopped."

Dawn knows from personal experience how important the chance to learn practical skills in a safe environment can be: "I remember dealing with a crash patient when I was a student nurse. I had never had any training on dealing with the situation apart from a lecture, and found it very frightening to think that this animal was in my care, and I was responsible for whether it lived or not. This is why it's really important that the students are able to practise and hone their skills before they are put in a similar situation."



Reminder that the new Code is in place

If you are teaching VN students or working as a clinical coach, don't forget that the new Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses is now in force.

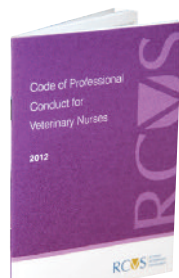
The new Code, alongside a Code for veterinary surgeons, was launched in April of this year, and a hard copy sent to all practising veterinary nurses in May. It is also available, together with detailed supporting guidance, at www.rcvs.org.uk/vncode.

The new Code is shorter than the old *Guide to Professional Conduct*, which it replaces, and is principles based.

However, much of the detail you may have been familiar with using as a teaching aid that was previously found in the old *Guide* and its annexes, or in the Advice Note series, has now been consolidated into the supporting guidance, of which there are currently 27 chapters.

If you have any queries about the Code, please contact the Professional Conduct Department, on 020 7202 0789, or profcon@rcvs.org.uk.

And if you are going to BVNA Congress in October, don't miss VN Council member Andrea Jeffery's presentation about the new Code, which takes place at 9.45 on Saturday, 6 October.



Face the facts

Annual report now published

We have now published *RCVS Facts*, part two of our annual report, which includes facts and figures about the veterinary nursing and veterinary professions, together with our summarised accounts.

As of 1 April 2012:

- There were 1,766 VN training practices and 47 centres
- 30% of student candidate registrations were in Higher Education
- There were 10,097 veterinary nurses on the RCVS List/Register, of which 88% 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 by Dr Anne Torgersen about veterinary nurse training in Europe, can also be downloaded, from www.rcvs.org.uk/review.

Half-time for Vectar

Project feedback positive

It's hard to believe, but the Vectar (Veterinary European Clinical Training and Assessment Record) project is almost half-way through.

The six partner schools of veterinary nursing met in Amsterdam in June, having finished their pilot of the RCVS Nursing Progress Log (NPL) and clinical coach training. A very busy two days was spent evaluating the UK day one skills list and adapting this to develop a European schedule of day one nursing skills. This was easier said than done; there are some significant differences in the role of VNs between countries.

But, in the end, agreement was reached, and a revised list is being applied to the Clinical Training and Assessment Record (CTAR), which is how the NPL will be known on the continent.

As well as formulating the list, the partners also suggested some improvements to the functionality of the CTAR, which will allow integral messaging and also cut down the number of clicks necessary to record a skill. We will be looking at these changes in terms of the NPL and importing the best of them, so you should see some improvements filtering in this autumn.

As we predicted, the partners will be developing an interactive clinical coach training package that will have a web-based option. The difficulties of getting clinical placement supervisors, sometimes located many kilometres from the college or university, to attend a training course are considerable.

During this mid-point meeting we had our own evaluation exercise. The Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA) is our monitoring partner and conducted an in-depth appraisal of progress so far. We are delighted to say the report is extremely positive, reflecting good progress and the excellent working relationships and enthusiasm between the project partners.

Keep an eye on the Vectar website for more information: www.vectar.org.



Golden Jubilee award

Contribution recognised at RCVS Day



This year's VN Council Golden Jubilee award was presented to a stalwart of VN education, Sue Badger (centre, with Dr Jerry Davies and Kathy Kissick).

The award, which recognises an exceptional contribution to veterinary nursing, was instigated last year to celebrate the 50th anniversary of veterinary nurse training.

Sue was presented with her certificate, and an engraved lead crystal bowl, at RCVS Day, which took place at the Royal College of Physicians on 6 July.

In presenting the award, then-President Jerry Davies praised Sue's dedication to the veterinary nursing profession, saying: "Her integrity and insight into not only the historical aspect of nursing but also its future, has gained her the respect of those across the whole of the veterinary profession."

RCVS Honours

This year's event also saw the presentation of an Honorary Associateship to Dr Douglas McGregor, Emeritus Professor of Immunology at the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University. Honorary Associateship is open to all non-members of the College who have made a special contribution to the veterinary sphere. In the past, veterinary nurses and educators have been honoured in this way, among others.

Meanwhile, Honorary Fellowship is awarded to members of the RCVS who have made an exceptional contribution in their field.

Do you know someone whose contribution deserves recognition? Nominations for the 2013 honours are now open, and more information can be found on the RCVS website (www.rcvs.org.uk/honours).

Also at RCVS Day, 13 veterinary nurses were presented with their Diplomas in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (Small Animal).

For a full report of the day, visit www.rcvs.org.uk.

Transitional students

Slower progress than expected

The RCVS Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing has now been running for two academic years. NVQ Level 2 students who registered for the transitional pathway during September 2010 should, by now, have completed the Nursing Progress Log (NPL) and entered their OSCE practical assessment. However, our statistics show that this is not the case.

Between 1 September 2010 and 31 January 2011, centres registered a total of 366 NVQ Level 2 students onto the Level 3 Diploma transitional pathway. Of the 366 students registered:

- 272 (72%) have entered one or more practical examinations
- 150* (41%) have passed overall
- 102* (28%) passed at the first attempt
- 55 (15%) entered an exam for the first time this summer
- 94 (28%) have yet to enter a practical examination
- 115 (31%) failed at least one attempt at the OSCE practical

"It is disappointing to see that less than half of the transitional students registered at the commencement of the Diploma delivery have successfully completed their programme of training and summative assessment," says Libby Earle, Head of Veterinary Nursing.

"It is especially worrying that a third of students who have been examined have needed to re-take, given that they were deemed competent in all units of the NPL by an RVN or MRCVS in practice before entering the examination. Almost a third of the transitional 'class of 2010' have yet to sit an OSCE," she adds.

**figures do not include those sitting for the first time this summer as results are not yet available*

New colleges in the pipeline

Two visits conducted

We are very pleased to see new colleges continuing to express an interest in delivering veterinary nurse training this year. Coleg Llandrillo Cymru, Gwynedd, and Northumberland College, Kirkley Hall Campus, Northumberland, underwent centre approval visits this summer.

The RCVS requires any new centre to demonstrate evidence of a sustainable market for their intended programme, ie the course should lead to an overall increase in the number of employers willing to support training. So these two new centres should lead to further increase in the supply of qualified VNs.

While RCVS Awards conducted visits to both new colleges, Coleg Llandrillo and Northumberland College will be delivering qualifications via either Central Qualifications or City & Guilds this autumn.

Meet the team

Priya Mehta

What's your role?

Veterinary Nursing Admissions Officer

What's your background?

My background is in business and languages. I completed my first degree in French, Spanish and Management, with a year abroad, and then went on to do a masters degree in International Business.

What do you do?

I deal with students at various different stages of the training process. My role involves dealing with careers queries, enrolments, student changes, certification and registration. I also deal with nurses who wish to transfer from the List of Veterinary Nurses to the Register of Veterinary Nurses.

What's been your biggest challenge?

Coming from an unrelated background, I had a lot to learn about veterinary nursing as a profession. Luckily, my role gives me an insight into many different areas of veterinary nursing, and so I'm always learning something new.

Surprise us...

I love salsa dancing!



Time for change: your que

An update on the divestment of RCVS Awards

By October this year, all new veterinary nursing students training via vocational qualifications will register with either Central Qualifications (CQ) or City & Guilds, and the RCVS will start to wind down its operation as an awarding organisation. However, this doesn't mean we will no longer be involved in veterinary nurse education and training, or that our current students (those undertaking the RCVS Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing) will be abandoned. The following notes should answer some of the questions you may still have.

What are the options?

During the summer, colleges have been approached by the two awarding organisations intending to offer alternative qualifications in veterinary nursing and will, by now, have decided which they will work with. Both CQ and City & Guilds have indicated to the RCVS that they wish to offer competitive initial fee structures so that neither colleges nor potential candidates are disadvantaged by the change. The RCVS will enrol as student veterinary nurses candidates from centres approved by either awarding institution (AI), and which have been notified to the College.

Why will students still enrol with the RCVS?

Students will need to register for a professional veterinary nursing qualification with an approved awarding institution. In addition, the RCVS will continue to enrol students for the purposes of keeping a record of those entitled to undertake Schedule 3 work. Enrolment will, as now, be the commencement of a student's professional record. Up until now, the RCVS has carried out both of these processes, although university students have always registered for their qualification separately (with their university). We will manage enrolment processes directly with centres (rather than awarding institutions), as we currently do, as this will be less bureaucratic or prone to delays.

From now, we will backdate enrolment (for professional regulatory purposes) to the date of receipt of an application and payment, or to the date of qualification registration, whichever is the later. This will avoid any potential disadvantage to students occasioned by the need to both register with an AI and enrol with the RCVS.

“Students will need to register for a professional veterinary nursing qualification with an approved awarding institution.”

Enrolment fees will continue to fund RCVS activities in relation to the regulation of pre-qualification VN education and training. This includes the professional quality assurance of all qualifications leading to the Register, which addresses the VN-specific requirements of the RCVS in relation to delivery (courses and practical training) and assessment.

How will the changes affect current RCVS students?

The RCVS will continue to support its current students unless and until their centres opt to transfer them to an alternative qualification, ie transfer their registration to a different awarding organisation. Before this can happen, a college must gain the permission of each student, taking into account their



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stage of training and assessment. No student can be unreasonably compelled to transfer, either by their college or the RCVS.

The RCVS Awards will not (and, as a recognised awarding organisation, cannot) simply close down. We have an obligation to our candidates, and we also have an obligation to the professions to ensure that VN vocational training can continue uninterrupted, to the expected standards. Colleges will remain RCVS centres until their last RCVS NVQ or Level 3 Diploma student either completes their qualification or the certification end-date for their award passes.

“The RCVS will continue to approve awarding institutions in its capacity as a professional regulator.”

What will be the role of the RCVS going forward?

Our future role will be twofold. In the medium term, and until RCVS Awards winds down, we will continue to support and quality-assure centres that still have RCVS students, as we currently do, ie EV visits and assessment monitoring will continue and centre fees will continue to be levied.

Alongside this role, the RCVS will continue to approve awarding institutions in its capacity as a professional regulator. In other words, the College must approve any organisation that offers a qualification leading to the Register of Veterinary Nurses. All such qualifications must meet standards specified by the RCVS in relation to content, rigour of assessment and quality of delivery, in addition to the generic quality requirements stipulated by universities or the national regulator (Ofqual and the Scottish, Welsh and Irish regulators).

Our monitoring of awarding institutions includes audit visits to colleges so that the VN Council may be satisfied that standards of delivery and assessment are being maintained. These RCVS visits will sample the standards being maintained by each approved AI; findings will be discussed with the institution concerned in relation to the approval criteria. As this will be a sampling exercise, such visits to centres will be significantly less frequent than is necessary for awarding organisation external verification purposes. The audit of AIs is reported to the VN Council.

Will the RCVS continue to hold VN examinations?

The RCVS will continue to provide examinations for its current NVQ and Level 3 Diploma students.

Alongside this, the Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) will continue to be available as ‘licence to practise’ examinations for veterinary nurses whose qualification has not, or has not yet, been fully approved as a registerable award. In practice, this means some overseas VN graduates. It also applies to students undertaking UK qualifications that are provisionally approved. This means all new VN qualifications (university or vocational) until such time as the VN Council has approved the nature and delivery of assessments (usually once all assessment processes have been implemented and tested in action). This reflects the requirements for new veterinary schools and does not necessarily entail additional assessment for students. However, awarding institutions must satisfy the VN Council requirements at an early stage, ie in time for their first cohort of assessed candidates. The RCVS is in dialogue with both City & Guilds and CQ and will make every effort to ensure that both organisations are able to do this.

Will VN examinations differ between AIs?

Examinations for all VN professional qualifications must address the requirements of the RCVS Veterinary Nursing Byelaws (see extract below).

Examination of qualifications

7	(1)	Qualifications leading to the award of the Certificate shall include the independent examination of knowledge, understanding and clinical skills. Independent examination shall: (a) be subject to oversight by one or more external examiners approved by the Veterinary Nurses Council (b) include a final, and objective, assessment of clinical skills
	(2)	New qualifications for which approval is sought may be directed by the Veterinary Nurses Council to subject candidates to examination either by the College or by an institution licensed by the College to hold examinations leading to the Certificate.

Both CQ and City & Guilds will provide multichoice question (MCQ) examinations testing knowledge and understanding, either as paper-based exams or via online on-demand testing. These exams may differ in format from the current RCVS exams but will provide an equally robust and valid assessment.

Vocational qualifications that use the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) units developed by the RCVS for the Level 3 Diploma must test practical skills via an OSCE examination, as specified in the units.

We are aware that colleges have been expressing a desire to have OSCEs delivered at colleges, rather than at dedicated examination centres, as is currently the case for RCVS examinations.

“The NPL will continue to evolve and improve as we incorporate suggestions from users.”

The nature of an OSCE examination may make it very difficult to deliver cost-effectively on-site at each centre while maintaining the essential integrity and rigour of this type of assessment. While there are other methods of testing practical skills, OSCEs are a well-established and evidence-based form of examination now widely used in the medical and veterinary fields to test competence.

OSCEs rely on two key factors for their integrity as an assessment method. The first is the testing of students across a significant number of skills concurrently. While practical skills can be tested incrementally over time, this is not an OSCE and lacks the overall picture of competence that this type of examination provides. The second ‘limb’ of OSCEs is the testing of each component skill by a different examiner, each of which contributes to the overall assessment of competence,

ie this assessment is the sum of a number of objective opinions, all gained during the same examination episode. Without these factors, together with defensible standard setting, a test cannot be deemed an OSCE examination.

Needless to say, this is an expensive process and is most cost-effective when operated in the context of a fully-booked examination centre at which a standardised cohort of examiners and set of test materials are provided. However, the robustness and validity of clinical competence assessment are key issues for veterinary nurses about to enter a professional register, which is why the RCVS adopted this form of assessment as a final external qualification assessment, and has specified it within the QCF units.

The two awarding organisations offering vocational qualifications are aware of these issues and the requirement to operate robust, objective, standardised testing of clinical skills as defined in the assessment criteria of the component units of their qualifications. In so doing, they will satisfy the RCVS Veterinary Nursing Byelaw requirements for robust and evidence-based competence assessment.

Will the Nursing Progress Log (NPL) still be available?

The VN Council is committed to continuing provision of the NPL, free of charge, for use by any approved awarding organisation, so that a common platform for the recording of clinical experience and competence is available to all clinical coaches and practices, some of whom support students from several colleges/universities.

While awarding institutions are free to develop their own systems, the majority have until now elected to use the NPL and we have accordingly avoided a proliferation of different IT and/or paper-based recording systems being imposed on practices.

As with any system that supports learning and assessment, the NPL will continue to evolve and improve as we incorporate suggestions from users, including those from our European partners in the Vectar project, and from periodic reviews of the day one skills list.

Questions?

Should you have questions about any of the above and how it may impact on your students or participation in VN training, please don’t hesitate to contact the Veterinary Nursing Department (see back page for contact details). However, please be aware that we cannot provide information concerning any aspect of either City & Guilds’ or CQ’s business operations, or advise you on your centre’s choice of future provision. You should contact these organisations direct.



Next stop, Glasgow

New Regional Question Time dates

Each year, the President and members of the Officer team travel across the country meeting veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and others working in the profession, to discuss the local issues and concerns that are affecting them.

Veterinary nurse training is a regular topic among the questions asked by delegates!

Regional Question Time meetings are a chance to meet the Officers in person and ask them your burning questions. Held in a local hotel, the evening meeting starts with light refreshments and the opportunity to catch up with colleagues, followed by open discussion and informal debate.

Over the next 12 months, we will be in the following locations:

- Glasgow: Wednesday 19 September 2012
- Oxford: Wednesday 13 February 2013
- Durham: May 2013 (date TBC)

Question Time is a great opportunity to keep up to date with changes in the profession, and can contribute to your continuing professional development.

All veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons living near the meeting venue will be sent a personal invitation in the post, and the meetings will also be publicised online and in the veterinary press.

We look forward to meeting you soon.

Don't forget Vetnet

Cremona's the place to be in September

Vetnet is the European Network for everyone involved in veterinary nurse training, and each year it holds an excellent annual conference.

This year's event will be held in Cremona, Italy, 20–21 September, under the theme 'What will the future bring?'.

Visit www.vetnet.com/conference for more information.



Visitors to the stand at BVNA Congress 2011

Congress catch up

Bring us your questions

The BVNA Congress (5–7 October) is moving to Telford this year – and there will be plenty of opportunities to catch up with the College.

The RCVS will have a stand in the foyer area, where, you can see a demo of the new Professional Development Record (see page 2) and take part in our competition. Staff will be on hand to answer any questions you may have about CPD, the new Code, the disciplinary system, or any other issue.

The following presentations will also be made by College representatives:

Friday 5 October

- 15.20: 'TP or not TP? Is that the question for your practice?', by Libby Earle, Head of Veterinary Nursing
- 16.15: 'The Practice Standards Scheme', by Peter Jinman, Practice Standards Group Chairman

Saturday 6 October

- 9.45, 'The new Code of Professional Conduct for VNs', by Andrea Jeffery, RCVS VN Council member

London Vet Show

Meanwhile, the London Vet Show is back at Olympia, London, on 15 and 16 November, where we will be out in force.

As well as a stand in the exhibition hall, we will also be holding a number of sessions over the two days. Two will take place on Thursday 15 November, during the British Veterinary Association Careers Fair, as follows:

- 12.45: 'Help! I've had an official complaint – what do I do next?', by Gordon Hockey, Acting Registrar
- 13.50: 'Learning doesn't stop at University – the Professional Development Phase, continuing professional development and postgraduate qualifications', by Professor Stephen May

And, during the Business programme on Friday 16 November (12.30–13.30), President Jacqui Molyneux will introduce a session entitled 'Navigating a Foreign Land', which aims to assist overseas graduates working in the UK.

If you are heading to Olympia for the event, please do join us.

Tied in knots over your NPL?

We expose some myths

Since the Nursing Progress Log (NPL) was launched two years ago, we have identified a number of common misunderstandings, and also some myths that circulate amongst clinical coaches and students.

We hope the following addresses some of these, and will help set your minds at rest.

Myth: students have to write a mini case report in the comments box when completing their NPL entries.

Fact: the reflective comments box is there for students to include a reflective account, ie feelings about their performance and the situation; it isn't necessary to describe in detail how the activity was completed. This is an optional facility, capped at 1,000 characters.

“Judgements about competence should be based on performance.”

Myth: witness statements must be written as for the NVQ portfolio – it isn't sufficient for the clinical coach to speak to witnesses.

Fact: the use of a witness must be planned in advance and appropriate witnesses should be identified at this stage. A clinical coach's

rationale when confirming a student's competence must explain clearly how that decision was reached. It may be appropriate to record discussion with a witness and/or the practice team regarding the student's performance.

Myth: clinical coaches should stipulate the number of activities to be completed before evaluating a student's competence, for example, students should take at least five thoracic radiographs.

Fact: this is poor practice and may unnecessarily hold up progress. A number of activities to be completed may be given as guidance, but must not provide the basis for making a competence assessment. Judgements about competence should be based on performance rather than the amount of experience logged. Students are individuals and progress at different paces, depending on their aptitude and the support they receive. Clinical coaches should evaluate competence when a student feels ready to be assessed.

Myth: all skills should be demonstrated on all relevant species, for example, subcutaneous injection must be demonstrated on a cat, a dog and an exotic (such as a rabbit) at least x times.

Fact: not necessary; most nursing skills are transferable to a degree. Students should gain experience with a wide range of species; however, a clinical coach might judge competence using a combination of observation involving a more limited range of species and professional discussion regarding the wider application and knowledge of a skill.

And finally, a confirmation that relevant cases should be referenced in the comments box each time an entry in the NPL is made, in a similar way to the portfolio case-logs, so that each entry logged can be tracked back to a case and the authenticity checked. The student must include a brief description of the activity, for example, 'held a fractious cat' and the case ID. This can be recorded in either the description or reflective comments box. Centres should indicate their preferred method of recording this information for the sake of consistency.

Some useful definitions:

Clinical coach: a person in a training practice who plans, trains, supervises, observes and makes decisions on students' practical competence

Clinical tutor: a person who plans, trains, observes and makes decisions on student practical competence in the College setting. Clinical tutors may assess skills in instances where it's difficult to gain

relevant experience in the training practice setting, for example, where there is limited equipment or exposure to certain species

Witness: a person who is a specialist within their field, ie laboratory technician or receptionist, and can provide a valid opinion on student performance

Quality verifier: a person who is employed by a centre and allocated to quality assure clinical

coach and clinical tutor decisions of student competence.

Equine and small animal skills: a person responsible for demonstrating and supervising core equine skills must hold a recognisable equine qualification, for example, Pony Club D+, or BHS Horse Care Stage 1. Conversely, a person demonstrating core small animal skills should hold a small animal veterinary nursing qualification.

In theory...

MCQ paper one feedback

At the time of writing, we are awaiting the results of the June theory examinations. In total, 1,845 Level 3 Diploma papers were delivered at approximately 150 Pearson Vue professional test centres. Of these, 586 students sat paper 1, Essentials of veterinary nursing, which comprises 90 questions, covering units VN1, VN5 and VN6.

Students generally do well in this paper, with previous pass-rates ranging between 80 and 90%. However, in the recent examination, the marks ranged from 39%-93%, demonstrating that some students were poorly prepared for this paper.

Getting in on the Act

One poor area was knowledge about the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (VSA). In relation to unit VN1 (Understanding the operational requirements of a veterinary practice), students were asked a range of questions concerning the different roles of veterinary staff. The questions are based on published information available online at www.rcvs.org.uk, and

included who may legally carry out common clinical procedures and the delegation of acts of veterinary surgery under Schedule 3 of the Act. In general, 85% of students had good knowledge, however, 15% demonstrated little or no understanding of what they, and others, may legally do under VSA provisions.

Is this poor understanding down to students observing staff performing procedures they are not legally entitled to undertake, believing this to be correct? Or could it be that veterinary nurses in their practice are never delegated acts of veterinary surgery, resulting in students having no concept of what they are allowed to do?

Students also seem surprised that they received questions relating to the safe use of anaesthetic machines and scavenging equipment and clippers, all of which are included in VN1 (outcome 3.1).

Infection control

In questions under unit VN5 (Infection control in veterinary

practice), many students had difficulty identifying major groups of disease-producing infectious agents in relation to animal health. Only 47% of students were able to explain the implications of antibiotic resistance for veterinary practice, which also features in this unit.

On a positive note, questions relating to VN6 (Understanding the essentials of veterinary nursing care for hospitalised animals), were answered well. This unit covers the theory of nursing patients, including planning patient care.

VRQ finishers

Eight students sat the last Level 2 Certificate in Veterinary Nursing Theory (VRQ) examinations, held in July. Successful students will be able to register for the Level 3 Diploma (transitional pathway). Unfortunately, those unsuccessful will have their RCVS award registration and enrolment ended. A very few students still need to sit the Level 3 VRQ examinations. These examinations will continue to be held until July 2013, when this award will reach its certification end-date.

Who's sitting next to you?

The latest in our exam myths

The latest in our series of exam myths helps you see the wood for the trees!

Myth: Pearson Vue test centres only deliver theory driving test and veterinary nursing examinations.

Fact: our relationship with Pearson Vue began in 2008, when the first computer based-tests for veterinary nurses were delivered. Pearson Vue is the global leader in computer-

based testing, offering exams in over 160 countries. One of their main contracts in the UK is to deliver the theory driving test for the Driving Standards Agency.

RCVS Awards is not the only professional body using Pearson Vue's secure testing environment, its centres are used by a number of other professional organisations to deliver 'high stakes' examinations

electronically. For example, veterinary nurse students may find themselves sitting in the same room as a doctor taking their Royal College of General Practitioners exams, or exams run by the Federation of Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK. A full list of professional organisations delivering tests through Pearson Vue can be found online at www.pearsonvue.com.

New VN Council line-up

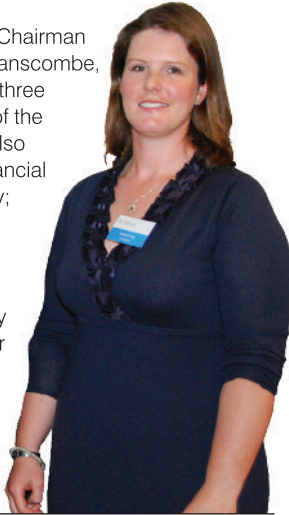
Kathy Kissick's in the chair

Newly-elected VN Council member, Elizabeth Figg (pictured), joined her colleagues for the first time at RCVS Day on 6 July. The other successful election candidate this year was Kathy Kissick, who remains on Council for a further four years.

Kathy now takes over as Chairman of VN Council from Liz Branscombe, who has held the role for three years. Liz becomes one of the two Vice-Chairmen and also takes over the role of Financial Liaison Officer from Kathy; Colonel Neil Smith is the other Vice-Chairman.

Penny Swindlehurst has been reappointed as a lay member of VN Council for a further four-year term.

The full list of VN Council members can be found online.



Who does what...

Libby Earle:	<i>Head of Veterinary Nursing</i>
Annette Amato:	<i>Deputy Head of Department, Awarding Body Board Secretary, Secretary to VN Council</i>
Julie Dugmore:	<i>Quality assurance and EV liaison</i>
Vicky Hedges:	<i>Examinations and higher education quality assurance</i>
Helen Cook:	<i>Centre approvals and monitoring, ACOVENE support</i>
Gabe Diaz:	<i>Examinations, overseas registration applications</i>
Alison Rengert:	<i>External Verifier</i>
Liz Troman:	<i>External Verifier</i>

NB EVs are home-based and may be contacted direct or via the VN Department on the details below.

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Practical examinations

Autumn 2012

Closing date for entries	17 August
Exam weekend	14 – 16 September
Results published	18 October

Winter 2012

Closing date for entries	2 November
Exam weekend	30 November – 2 December
Results published	10 January

Spring 2013

Closing date for entries	22 February
Exam weekend	22 – 24 March
Results published	25 April

Summer 2013

Closing date for entries	7 June
Exam weekend	5 – 7 July
Results published	8 August

Theory examinations (e-assessment)

Winter 2012

Closing date for entries	7 September
Appointment booking window	1 – 26 October
Exam weeks	29 October – 11 November
Results published	13 December

Spring 2013

Closing date for entries	11 January
Appointment booking window	4 February – 1 March
Exam weeks	4 March – 17 March
Results published	10 April

Summer 2013

Closing date for entries	3 May
Appointment booking window	28 May – 21 June
Exam weeks	24 June – 7 July
Results published	15 August

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