

2020 Follow up Report after External Review by ENQA

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Introduction

In April 2018, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) underwent its first external review, coordinated by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The outcome of the panel concluded that the RCVS complies with the revised 2015 Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher-Education Area (ESG).

ENQA found the RCVS to be fully compliant with eight standards, substantially compliant with four standards and partially compliant with two standards as below:

Fully Compliant	Substantially Compliant	Partially Compliant
3.2 Official Status	3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance	3.4 Thematic analysis
3.3 Independence	3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct	2.5 Criteria for outcomes
3.5 Resources	2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance	
3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies	2.4 Peer-review experts	
2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose		
2.3 Implementing processes		
2.6 Reporting		
2.7 Complaints and appeals		

The ENQA Board presented a series of recommendations designed to improve the College's activities, requesting that it present a report within two years on the specific actions carried out with regard to these recommendations.

The recommendations have been reviewed by the Education Department at the RCVS and the response is detailed in this report.

Implementation of recommendations

3.1 Activities, Policy And Processes For Quality Assurance

Standard:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance (QA) activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

Guidelines:

A variety of external quality assurance activities are carried out by agencies to achieve different objectives. Among them are evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation or other similar activities at programme or institutional level that may be carried out differently. When the agencies also carry out other activities, a clear distinction between external quality assurance and their other fields of work is needed.

ENQA Panel Conclusion:

Substantially Compliant

ENQA Panel and ENQA Board Recommendation:

- Add a more comprehensive QA policy to the next strategic plan or develop a separate QA policy document that would help stakeholders outside the RCVS to understand the aim and scope of its QA activities.
- Engage students from both veterinary surgeons and nurses' programmes to the decision-making bodies of the RCVS.

Action taken by RCVS:

There were two action points relating to this standard. The first action was to develop a comprehensive QA policy. In order to address this and other recommendations relating to QA, the RCVS has appointed a Quality Improvement Manager to focus on the QA aspects of the educational activities of the organisation. The scope of the role includes both the veterinary surgery degrees and the veterinary nursing qualifications.

The role is independent of the education department and is accountable across the RCVS qualification activities. The QA policy and procedures were written and then reviewed by the RCVS Audit & Risk Committee (ARC). This committee reviews the QA activities annually, including a review of the Internal Quality assurance (IQA) policy and procedures.

The full QA Policy is in Appendix A

The second action point is to engage and appoint student representatives from both the veterinary and veterinary nursing programmes to the decision-making bodies of the RCVS.

There are now student representatives on a number of RCVS committees, including the Education Committee (EC), the Primary Qualification Subcommittee (PQSC) and Vet Nurse Education Committee (VNEC). Students are also now invited

to be part of the visitor panel for the accreditation of qualifications, as well as members of working groups such as the Accreditation Standards Review Working Party, the Vet Graduate Development Program (Vet GDP) task and finish group, the Mind Matters Taskforce and the Diversity, Inclusion & Equality Working Group.

The inclusion of students within these groups and committees has brought a different perspective to the discussions. For example, within the accreditation review panels (for both veterinary and veterinary nursing programmes), the student member is able to review the course content and how it appeals to a student looking at the course. Within committees, the student perspective is crucial to ensure that decision-making is relevant to student needs.

An ongoing piece of work is to now explore the impact of the student members of the committees, panels and working groups.

Appendix B shows the invitations to application for student representatives, as well as minutes from a selection of meetings where student representatives were present.

3.4 Thematic analysis

Standard:

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

Guidelines:

In the course of their work, agencies gain information on programmes and institutions that can be useful beyond the scope of a single process, providing material for structured analyses across the higher education system. These findings can contribute to the reflection on and the improvement of quality assurance policies and processes in institutional, national and international contexts. A thorough and careful analysis of this information will show developments, trends and areas of good practice or persistent difficulty.

ENQA Panel Conclusion:

Partially Compliant

ENQA Panel and ENQA Board Recommendation:

- Develop a clear concept and plan for thematic analysis.
- Set clear roles and responsibilities among staff members for analysing and publishing general findings of the College's external quality assurance activities.

Action taken by RCVS:

There is a range of data available to the RCVS from a variety of stakeholders, much of which has not been formally analysed. By completing a qualitative analysis of this data, and continuing with regular analysis, this data can be used to inform of trends and areas of good practice in order to influence future developments within both regulation and delivery of qualifications.

In order to ensure this analysis is thorough and meaningful, a concept and plan for thematic analysis has been developed that also establishes clear roles and responsibilities within the RCVS for analysing and publishing the general findings of the College's external QA activities. In 2020, the Quality Improvement Manager was appointed and within the remit of the role is to analyse RCVS data to identify themes and trends.

The aims of the Thematic Analysis Policy are to ensure that the findings of all external QA activities are analysed, not only for emerging themes, but also to proactively identify topical themes. The analysis will be shared with stakeholders as well as used to inform quality improvement. By publishing the findings, the aim is to reassure the profession that the RCVS is taking a holistic approach to maintaining and enhancing standards in the veterinary professions.

It is important to ensure that the publication and reporting of the emerging findings from the analysis is done in an impactful way, and not so often as to lose its significance. One method is to release "soundbites" and not full reports, as this can often be linked to other reports in order to provide context. It is also crucial to ensure that the reporting style is relevant to the specific stakeholder for whom the information is targeted.

See Appendix C for the Thematic Analysis Policy and Action Plan

3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

Standard:

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

Guidelines:

Agencies apply an internal quality assurance policy which is available on its website. This policy:

- ensures that all persons involved in its activities are competent and act professionally and ethically;
- includes internal and external feedback mechanisms that lead to a continuous improvement within the agency;
- guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination; - outlines the appropriate communication with the relevant authorities of those jurisdictions where they operate;
- ensures that any activities carried out and material produced by subcontractors are in line with the ESG, if some or all of the elements in its quality assurance activities are subcontracted to other parties;
- allows the agency to establish the status and recognition of the institutions with which it conducts external quality assurance.

ENQA Panel Conclusion:

Substantially Compliant

ENQA Panel and ENQA Board Recommendation:

- Apply a systematic approach for collecting feedback and align the procedures at accreditations of veterinary and veterinary nursing degrees whenever possible.

Action taken by RCVS:

Part of the accreditation process is to collate feedback from the stakeholders involved in the visit, which includes members of the visitation team, as well as the educational establishment staff and students. The feedback documents are broadly similar for both veterinary and veterinary nursing accreditation visits.

For upcoming visits, this feedback will be collected by the Quality Improvement Manager acting independently of the visitation team, and a combination of methods will be used to collect the feedback, including written, verbal and via remote meetings (eg on Microsoft Teams or Zoom).

The data can then be analysed to inform processes for future visits (see Thematic Analysis Policy in Appendix C)

The procedures for the accreditation processes for veterinary and veterinary nursing degrees have been represented in a flowchart to indicate the alignment of the processes. This can be seen as part of the IQA Policy in Appendix A and as a separate diagram in Appendix D.

2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

Standard:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

Guidelines:

Quality assurance in higher education is based on the institutions' responsibility for the quality of their programmes and other provision; therefore, it is important that external quality assurance recognises and supports institutional responsibility for quality assurance. To ensure the link between internal and external quality assurance, external quality assurance includes consideration of the standards of Part 1. These may be addressed differently, depending on the type of external quality assurance.

ENQA Panel Conclusion:

Substantially Compliant

ENQA Panel and ENQA Board Recommendation:

Develop veterinary nursing accreditation methodology closer to the one of veterinary surgeons and, through this, increase the focus on IQA in veterinary nursing reviews, with especial attention to student-centred learning, also in VN reviews.

Action taken by RCVS:

In January 2020, the new RCVS Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and training was implemented and the accreditation process was brought to be more in line with the veterinary surgeon accreditation process.

The flowchart in Appendix D shows the links between the accreditation processes for veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons. There are some differences in the cycles, such as the fact that the veterinary accreditation cycle runs over seven years, whereas the veterinary nursing cycle runs over five years. The accreditation visit for veterinary degrees takes place over one week, whereas the visit to accredit veterinary nursing degrees takes place over one day. The outcomes are validated by different committees for veterinary degrees and vet nursing degrees, but the process takes a similar amount of time (around six months from visitation to published report). The Education Committee makes reports and decisions for veterinary degrees. However in the case of a new veterinary degree, the report will go to RCVS Council on its first accreditation, as it needs the ratification by RCVS Council prior to going Privy Council for a Recognition Order. The VN Education Committee makes the decision for all veterinary nursing qualification accreditations and the VN Council will ratify all those decisions.

The RCVS Council has the accreditation outcomes reported to it through the minutes of Education Committee and VN Council.

The new VN standards also have a full section dedicated to student-centred learning under Standard 3 "Student Empowerment".

See link to [VN Accreditation Standards](#)

2.4 Peer-review experts

Standard:

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s)

Guidelines:

At the core of external quality assurance is the wide range of expertise provided by peer experts, who contribute to the work of the agency through input from various perspectives, including those of institutions, academics, students and employers/professional practitioners.

In order to ensure the value and consistency of the work of the experts, they

- are carefully selected;
- have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their task;
- are supported by appropriate training and/or briefing.

The agency ensures the independence of the experts by implementing a mechanism of no-conflict-of-interest. The involvement of international experts in external quality assurance, for example as members of peer panels, is desirable as it adds a further dimension to the development and implementation of processes.

ENQA Panel Conclusion:

Substantially Compliant

ENQA Panel and ENQA Board Recommendation:

At VN accreditation, pursue the widening of review pools and avoid relying too heavily on the senior staff of the RCVS.

Action taken by RCVS:

Since the visit in 2018, the composition of the VN accreditation visiting panel has been adjusted in order to widen the participation. The VN accreditation visiting panel is made up of an industry representative, an employer representative and a student representative, as well as the RCVS Qualifications Manager and RCVS Examinations Manager. This is to remove the reliance on RCVS staff.

The experts are usually recruited by word of mouth; historically the RCVS has advertised in veterinary publications and actively approached universities and colleges, but the uptake was poor and the costs outweighed the gains. The Veterinary Nursing Department is confident that the current availability of experts meets the requirements of the accreditations, with a healthy number of active experts available for the various panels. Currently there are 37 experts; 12 industry representatives, five employer representatives and 12 student representatives. Nevertheless, it is clear to see that the number of employer representatives is lower than the other two roles; alternative approaches have been tried, which include approaching large employer groups at

conferences and contacting employers directly and requesting that they suggest suitable experts. Thus far, approaching employers directly appears to be the best strategy, however, there is a risk of decreased employer availability at accreditations if this representation is not increased.

Widening review pools is not only an issue for the VN accreditation teams, but also for the veterinary accreditation teams. The issues surrounding this are two-fold; firstly the issue with recruiting visitors, mainly from educators and employers, and then, once recruited, to ensure training is completed, as currently veterinary accreditation team visitors need to observe a visit before they can form part of the panel. With only two-or-three visits taking place per year, this means that there is limited opportunity for observations.

There are a variety of suggestions to overcome these issues, and following recent discussions, many of these are being implemented:

- Employ a snowball system, whereby each visitor has to recommend someone to become a visitor;
- Each university has to provide at least two members of staff to be visitors;
- Adjust the training requirement so that an observation isn't necessary. Instead, have a mixture of new and experienced members on the visiting panel so that the new members learn from the experienced members;
- Have more online training to include "homework" to be completed between modules. Have specific modules for specific roles, for example, student and chair;
- When advertising for visitors, emphasise the secondary learning, such as leadership and teamwork, and ensure that the training is recognised as CPD.

Whilst engaging visitor panel members, it is also important to have an overview of the whole visitor pool and ensure that there is a sufficient diversity of members whilst meeting the requirements for a balance of educationalists, employers and industry experts.

2.5 Criteria for outcomes

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

Guidelines:

External quality assurance and in particular its outcomes have a significant impact on institutions and programmes that are evaluated and judged.

In the interests of equity and reliability, outcomes of external quality assurance are based on pre-defined and published criteria, which are interpreted consistently and are evidence-based. Depending on the external quality assurance system, outcomes may take different forms, for example, recommendations, judgements or formal decisions.

ENQA Panel Conclusion:

Partially Compliant

ENQA Panel and ENQA Board Recommendation:

Accreditation decisions should be confinable and justifiable.

Therefore, the review panel recommends to:

- consider whether the complex system of decision-making could be simplified;
- make the option "Full accreditation for a shorter period" more precise.

Action taken by RCVS:

Many of the decision-making protocols are part of RCVS legislation and have to be taken by specified committees. However, some of the decision making has been devolved by the RCVS Council to subcommittees, removing some of the layers in the process.

Although it is possible for the RCVS to push for changes in the statute to address where decisions are made, in the current political climate, it is highly unlikely that there will be any opportunities for changes to be presented to Government in the near future.

There is always the danger that decisions taken at a distance from the original accreditation review visit will not relate to the observations made; therefore the reports need to be detailed and accurate and have clarity that requires no further verbal input. However, there is currently the option for the chair of the review panel to be present at each of the committee stages to offer clarity and context. The wording for the accreditation for a shorter period has been reviewed and adjusted so that it now reads:

b) Accreditation for a shorter period if significant deficiencies are identified: accreditation will be subject to the deficiencies being addressed within a specified period and subject to satisfactory periodic reports. The RCVS will normally undertake a re-visit before the accreditation period expires to monitor progress in addressing any identified concerns. This may be a full re-visit covering all the standards (normally held over one week) or a more focussed re-visit that concentrates on progress with addressing specific deficiencies (which would normally be held over one or two days). Consideration of a shorter period of accreditation subject to conditions will apply where there are either a) one or more major deficiencies, or b) a series of lesser deficiencies which, taken together, could have a significant impact on students' education, but which are deemed to be rectifiable within a given period of time. When accreditation for a shorter period is granted, the exact period of time will be specified and rationale for the decision conveyed to the veterinary school.

Those sections highlighted have been changed in light of the ENQA recommendation.

ENQA suggestions for further development

Suggestions for further development:

3.6:

As there is no one document describing the IQA policies and responsibilities, the RCVS is invited to consider developing a formal policy document. It is suggested that this document includes formal procedures of IQA, articulation of responsibilities and formalised feedback structures to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose. This would allow for greater transparency and recording of formalised IQA systems.

2.3:

As an area of good practice, expert panels of VN accreditation can see the university's response and action plan, and comment on the reply if necessary. It is suggested that expert panels of VS accreditation are also provided the opportunity to view the university's responses.

Other:

It is recognised that RCVS is not a typical QA agency but is a very experienced QA provider, although an inexperienced member of the European QA community. The review panel would encourage the RCVS to become more active participants of the relevant discourse and community activities.

Action taken by RCVS:

3.6

The RCVS has now compiled a Quality Assurance Document that includes the formal IQA procedures, the roles and responsibilities and feedback structures. This can be found in Appendix A.

2.3

The response to the accreditation reports has been modified to enable the visiting panels of both the veterinary and veterinary nursing degrees to view the university responses. This is seen in the QA policy document in Appendix A.

Other:

Since the external review in 2018, RCVS staff have attended the General Assembly and Members Forum, participated in the ENQA Leadership Programme (2019/2020 and 2020/2021), as well as participated in a number of webinars. All these events have been relevant and informative and have helped to form links across the European community. Through participation in the last ENQA leadership programme, the opportunity to discuss and share ideas with colleagues in similar positions in other institutions has been invaluable and the links that have been formed with European peers has enabled further sharing of ideas as quality standards within RCVS are developed and improved.

Appendix A

RCVS Quality Assurance Policy for Accreditation Activities

Quality Statement

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) is the statutory regulator responsible under the Veterinary Surgeons Act (1966) for the regulation of the veterinary profession.

This includes:

- The registration of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses in the UK
- Accrediting and maintaining the requirements for professional veterinary education

By implementing a robust quality assurance system, the RCVS is committed to safeguarding the interests of the public so that they can be confident in the care that their animals receive.

The quality assurance policy for all activities aims to be transparent, fair, and free from bias and accurately details and records all quality assurance decisions. This includes the monitoring of education accreditation in line with both veterinary surgeon and veterinary nursing standards in order to maintain their quality and integrity.

Introduction and aims

This policy is to provide clear guidance and a framework to enable greater consistency of accreditation practice within the RCVS for veterinary schools, as well as universities awarding licence to practice qualifications in veterinary nursing.

The focus is on the quality of accreditation activities and decisions and confirms that the accreditation requirements of institutions are being reviewed and that the required standards are being met. It also provides an opportunity for problems to be identified and remedied and for the recognition and sharing of good practice.

Through the quality assurance process, the RCVS aims to ensure that:

- the education accreditation process is understandable to stakeholders, effectively administered and accountable;
- the qualifications are offered by institutions that have the adequate resources, environment and expertise to ensure valid teaching, learning and assessment of students against the learning outcomes and Day 1 Competences and Skills;

- fairness, consistency and transparency surround the approval of veterinary education programmes.

Quality Assurance Cycle

The quality assurance of the accreditation cycle must ensure that accreditation activities are, robust, valid & reliable, that they are carried out in such a way as to be open, fair and free from bias, and that accreditation visitors adhere to the RCVS Accreditation Standards in the judgement of evidence. The recording of accreditation decisions must be accurate and detailed and demonstrate consistent and transparent implementation of the standards.

The accreditation cycles for both veterinary surgeon and veterinary nursing education run on a similar format with a few key differences. It is worth noting that the **RCVS Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training** has been recently updated and the new standards implemented from January 2020. From this date, all accreditation visits will be reviewed against the new standards. The **RCVS Standards and Procedures for the Accreditation of Veterinary Degrees** are currently under review and aim to be in place from early 2021. The Standards are reviewed regularly by the RCVS Education and Veterinary Nursing Departments to ensure they remain current and fit for purpose.

Figure 1 shows the cycle of accreditation of veterinary education programmes. The veterinary degree accreditation cycle runs over seven years, whereas the veterinary nursing cycle runs over five years. The accreditation visit for veterinary degrees takes place over one week, whereas the visit to accredit veterinary nursing degrees takes place over one day. The outcomes are validated by different committees for veterinary degrees and vet nursing degrees, but the process takes a similar amount of time (around six months from visitation to published report). The Education Committee makes reports and decisions for veterinary degrees. However in the case of a new veterinary degree, the report will go to RCVS Council on its first accreditation, as it needs the ratification by Council prior to going Privy Council for a Recognition Order. The VN Education Committee makes the decision for all veterinary nursing qualification accreditations and VN Council will ratify all those decisions.

RCVS Council will have the accreditation outcomes reported through the minutes of Education Committee and VN Council.

Through the accreditation process, the RCVS determines whether programmes leading to registration as a veterinary professional have met the standards for education for both veterinary and veterinary nursing degrees. This enables the RCVS to be assured that the programmes are of the required level and that those who are awarded a qualification are eligible to apply for registration with the RCVS.

The IQA process gives confidence to the RCVS and stakeholders that the accreditation processes within the cycle are operating consistently and fairly within the published policies and procedures. The procedures are detailed in a separate document, but are linked to the IQA activities listed here. The Quality Improvement Manager is responsible for ensuring the activities are completed. This is through the completion of a range of IQA activities within the accreditation cycle to include, but not limited to:

- An audit of the Self Evaluation Reports (VS) or Application Form (VN) in preparation for the accreditation visit. (Item 1 in Procedure Document)
- Ensure the selection of the visitation team is free from conflict and training is sufficient to meet the demands of the role to ensure visitor decisions are consistent, reliable and free from bias. (Item 2 in Procedure Document)
- An audit of the evidence submitted and gathered for each Standard to check for accuracy (Item 4 in Procedure Document)
- An audit of measures in place to ensure the security of all potentially sensitive records and activities made available by the educational establishment for the purposes of the accreditation process. (Item 5 in Procedure Document)
- Ensure verbal feedback given on completion of a site visit is consistent with the findings and subsequent written report. (Item 6 in Procedure Document)
- Ensure the decision making of the final report is free from bias and is based on meeting the published Standards (Item 7 in Procedure Document)
- Thematic analysis of the outcomes of an accreditation review to enhance future practice. To be carried out by the Quality Improvement Manager.

Appeals procedure

In the unlikely event that an institution wishes to question the formal outcomes of the accreditation process, appeals procedures are detailed in *Standards and Procedures for the Accreditation of Veterinary Degrees* and *RCVS Veterinary Nurse Visitation and Accreditation Appeals Procedure* both of which are available on the RCVS website.

Visitor training and Standardisation

Accreditation visitor training follows a standardised approach for new visitors. Prior to the accreditation for which they are booked, new visitors are required to observe a full visitation and attend a day training session at the RCVS. This training comprises a presentation, covering:

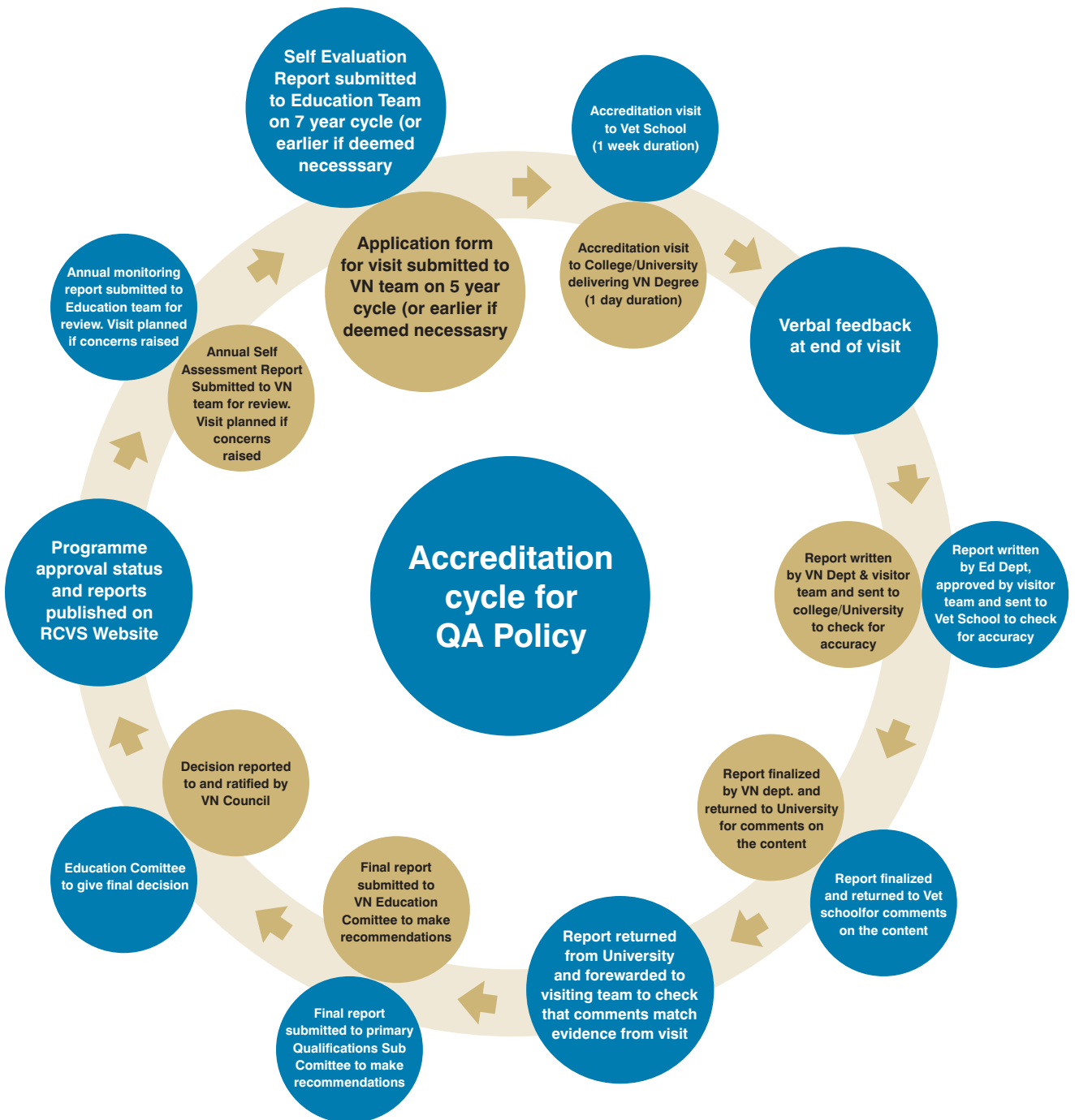
- the rationale behind accreditations
- agendas and timetables
- expected conduct and behaviours
- example applications and Self-evaluation Reports
- The IQA policy and procedures

This training is also available to members of the PQSC and VN Education Committee to ensure thorough understanding of the processes linked to accreditation reviews.

The IQA policy is integral to the induction process of accreditation visitors and decision-makers. The visitor panel chair will ensure that all accreditation visitors and decision makers have a responsibility to give full and active support for the policy by ensuring that it is known, understood and implemented appropriately.

The evening before the accreditation, all panel members attend a meeting in order to discuss the common themes, the timetable, good practice measures to ensure robust evidence gathering and reaffirm the agreed conduct and behaviour expected.

All accreditation/ re-accreditation reports will be published on the relevant part of the RCVS website.



Visitation activities

Before the visit, the panel assesses the evidence submitted in support of vet school and university accreditation applications. Based on the assessment, it is the role of the panel to identify and design suitable activities to ensure robust evidence of RCVS Accreditation Standards is obtained to inform recommendations and decisions. The planning of the visit and the visitation activities are monitored by the Quality Improvement Manager (QIM) to ensure that the accreditation activities are being conducted properly and consistently and that regulatory accreditation standards are being interpreted accurately. Any arising issues are identified before the visit and appropriate activities for the visit are recommended.

During the visit, it is the role of the panel chair (supported by the QIM and / or staff member from the RCVS Education Department for vet school visits), to ensure that the accreditation process is conducted by the panel in a supportive manner and that accreditation practice is consistently applied, is of consistent quality, is sufficient and meets regulatory standards. This is also detailed in item 3 of the IQA Procedures

Once the visit is completed, the panel will develop accreditation reports identifying recommendations and actions for discussion by PQSC and VN Education Committee respectively. For VN only, they will also review agreed action plans, and the panel is also on hand to provide advice and support to vet schools and universities awarding licence to practise veterinary nursing qualification to achieve compliance with the RCVS Accreditation Standards, as requested.

As a result of the visit, the QIM will use the data to identify themes and trends within the veterinary schools and universities awarding licence to practise veterinary nursing qualifications as well as identify staff training needs.

A representative sample of accreditation activities will be selected taking into account, as appropriate:

- Accreditation activities and events
- Accreditation and annual monitoring reports
- Schedules of activity
- Risk assessments
- Accreditation decisions
- Accreditation training and standardisation activities
- Feedback from all stakeholders

Report checking and approval by committees

Accreditation visitors and RCVS staff are responsible for undertaking accreditation activities and collecting robust supporting evidence that veterinary schools and universities awarding licence to practise veterinary nursing qualifications are compliant with RCVS Accreditation Standards.

The Primary Qualifications Subcommittee (PQSC) will make recommendations to the Education Committee, based on the accreditation visit to vet schools. The Education Committee will make the final decision of the outcome of the visit. In the case of a new programme, the final outcome will rest with RCVS Council. The VN Education Committee is responsible for decision-making based on the evidence put forward by the accreditation visitation teams, which is then ratified by VN Council.

These committees will ensure:

- The identification and design of suitable activities within the visitation to enable the gathering of robust evidence of RCVS Accreditation Standards to inform recommendations and decisions;
- The production of developmental advice and support for regulatory requirements
- Advice and guidance is given for all those working with the accreditation standards;
- Only approved individuals enter the accreditation visiting pools and that the visitation panels are reviewed and approved in advance
- Accreditation activity reports are appraised and will then decide on any recommendations and actions to agree accreditation status decisions;
- The monitoring of accreditation action plans and annual monitoring reports;
- Attendance at standardisation meetings as required.

The RCVS Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) has the overall responsibility to ensure compliance with the IQA Policy and Procedures and that the appropriate evidence is being correctly completed and submitted. This is completed on an annual basis. This committee in turn updates RCVS Council by reviewing the comprehensiveness and reliability of assurances and internal controls.

Appendix B

New student veterinary nurse visitors

The RCVS undertakes visitations to UK veterinary nursing awarding organisations and higher education institutions (AO/HEIs) approximately every five years as part of its Royal Charter duty to monitor the standards of veterinary nursing education. These visits are to assure new and re-validated programmes are compliant with RCVS AO/HEI, Centre and TP Standards, published in the RCVS AO/HEI Handbook.

A visit team is made up of three-to-four visitors, including an industry expert, RCVS representative and a student representative. There may also be non-participating trainee visitors in attendance.

Applications are welcomed from student veterinary nurses who are one year pre-qualification, and up to two years post-qualification, having completed their qualification within the education sector concerned (further or higher education). Students are expected to take responsibility for their own work schedule, and to prioritise their studies before RCVS accreditation events.

A visitors' role is to work as a member of a team of experts to review and make recommendations to the RCVS on the standard of AO/HEI provision, following agreed RCVS AO/HEI, Centre and TP Standards. Visitors will need good problem-solving skills as well as the ability to interpret large amounts of complex information. Good communication skills are essential, as are a willingness to listen to other points of view and to form a consensus.

Visitations last for a day and visitors need to be able to devote time both before and afterwards for reading and preparing reports. The RCVS will pay a loss of earnings allowance to employers for any time away from work for training and visits, as well as reasonable expenses.

The list of visitors is reviewed periodically by the VN Education Committee, and student visitors should expect to remain on the list for a period commensurate with their qualification date. It is difficult to be specific regarding the number of visits that any one visitor might undertake during that period, and frequency of visit requests will vary greatly depending on the size of the visitor pool, and the number of institutions requiring RCVS accreditation. The RCVS will therefore work flexibly with the visitor pool, to try and fit in with individual commitments where possible. While the RCVS request a 12-month period for new institutions to notify the RCVS of pending accreditation events, occasionally

visits will be organised at shorter notice. The RCVS will notify the visitor pool at the earliest possible opportunity, and visitors will have the opportunity to express their interest in attending visits.

There is further guidance for visitors in the RCVS AO/HEI Handbook.

Visitor training

Visitor training will be set on a demand basis, and may include AO/HEI representative trainees. Training will include a half day visit to the RCVS in Westminster, and could also include non-active attendance to an accreditation activity.

How to apply

New applicants should complete the evidence column on the person specification and supply an up to date CV and student veterinary nurse person specification form. Applications are considered by the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee on recommendations from the RCVS VN Department. We will contact you to let you know whether your application has been approved and, if so, will add your name to the visitor list on the website.

Applications should be submitted to s.gibbins@rcvs.org.uk.

Student members of RCVS Education Committee & Primary Qualification Subcommittee

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons is searching for veterinary student representatives to sit on their Education Committee (EC) and Primary Qualification Subcommittee (PQSC).

Both the EC and the PQSC would like to invite two students to join the committee membership;

- One veterinary student within their first two years of study
- One veterinary student in their final two years of study

The term of membership will be two years for each student, and there will be the opportunity for the student representative from the initial two years of study to reapply for a second term, when in their final two years of study. RCVS will reimburse any travel and subsistence expenses.

If you would like more information please contact Dr Linda Prescott-Clements, RCVS Director of Education at L.Prescott-Clements@rcvs.org.uk.

A person specification for the role is included in Appendix 1.

To apply for this role, please send a CV and cover letter to L.Prescott-Clements@rcvs.org.uk by 12 noon Monday 28th January 2019

Further details of the work of each of the committees is described below.

Education Committee

The RCVS Education Committee is a standing committee which supports RCVS Council in decisions relating to veterinary education matters. The terms of reference for the committee are to set the policy for undergraduate and postgraduate education and training of veterinary surgeons and determine the requirements for those seeking registration, for the award of qualifications under the Charter, for continuing professional development and for recognition as RCVS Advanced Practitioner and RCVS Specialist. The full terms of reference are shown below.

Education Committee membership

Professor Ewan Cameron
Dr Danny Chambers
Professor Susan Dawson (Chair)
Ms Linda Ford
Mrs Andrea Jeffrey
Mrs Susan (Sue) Paterson
Dr Cheryl Scudamore
Professor James Wood
Operational Board Member as Observer:
Professor Stephen May
Chairs of Education Subcommittees

Full terms of reference agreed by RCVS Council June 2015

1. The Education Committee shall set the policy for undergraduate and postgraduate education and training of veterinary surgeons and determine the requirements for those seeking registration, for the award of qualifications under the Charter, for continuing professional development, and for recognition as RCVS Advanced Practitioner and RCVS Specialist.
2. The Committee shall develop and keep under review education and training requirements for registration, and in particular shall:
 - define "day 1 competences" and advise on the content of

- the veterinary undergraduate curriculum;
- oversee the approval process and ongoing monitoring of veterinary degrees and international recognition agreements, considering sub-committee reports on appointment of visitors, visitation reports, follow-up reports and annual monitoring reports from veterinary schools, sub-committee reports on overseas degrees from other accrediting bodies, and subcommittee reports on operation of the statutory membership examination;
- make decisions on recognition of registrable veterinary degrees;
- make recommendations to Council on the regulations governing the statutory membership examination and on the regulations governing practice by students.

3. The Committee shall develop and keep under review policy for continuing professional development, revalidation and postgraduate training and qualifications, and in particular shall:
 - define "year 1 competences" and monitor the postgraduate development phase;
 - set the requirements for and monitor continuing professional development within the profession;
 - develop and maintain a framework of College postgraduate awards, receiving reports from sub-committees on the standards for College-awarded certificates, diplomas and fellowships, examinations and accreditation of other recognised postgraduate qualifications as part of the framework;
 - define the requirements for RCVS Advanced Practitioner and RCVS Specialist status, receiving reports from sub-committees on the maintenance of lists for Advanced Practitioners and Specialists; and
 - recommend to Council amendments to the certificate and diploma and Fellowship bye-laws.

The Committee shall recommend fees to the Operational Board for candidates, examiners and visitors, Advanced Practitioners, Specialists and Fellows.

The Education Committee meets in London, four times each year, for approximately 2-3 hours. The dates for 2019 Education Committees are as follows:

Tuesday 5th February
Tuesday 7th May
Tuesday 10th September
Tuesday 12th November

Primary Qualification Subcommittee (PQSC)

The PQSC reports directly to RCVS Education Committee, on matters relating to the recognition of veterinary degrees. The full terms of reference for this committee are described below.

PQSC Membership

Dr Clare Tapsfield-Wright (Chair)

Mrs Lynne Hill

Professor Malcolm Cobb

Dr Jo Oultram

Professor Susan Rhind

Dr Jerry Davies (as statutory exam chair)

Dr Mandisa Green (as Extra-Mural Studies coordinators group chair)

PQSC Terms of Reference

1. to consider reports of visitors (including follow-up reports) to veterinary schools and make recommendations to the Education Committee on the recognition of undergraduate veterinary degrees so that Council can submit formal advice to the Privy Council
2. to consider annual monitoring reports from the veterinary schools
3. to consider and make recommendations to Education Committee on the appointment of RCVS visitors and observers
4. to keep RCVS visitation/accreditation criteria under review and in line with any relevant international standards and to consider annual statistical returns
5. to oversee the work of the Statutory Examination Board and ensure that the standards for entry onto the register by this route are consistent with recognised degrees
6. to receive reports of meetings of the EMS Co-ordinators

The PQSC meets 3 or 4 times each year in London, depending upon business. The date of the next meeting is established at the end of each meeting.

Appendix 1: Person Specification Sheet

Factors			Criteria
Education and professional qualifications	Essential	A1	Be enrolled as a veterinary student either (i) in the first two years of study or (ii) the final two years of study in a UK veterinary school
Experience/training	Desirable	C1	Familiarity with Veterinary Education accreditation processes
Specific aptitude and abilities	Essential	D1 D2 D3 D4 D5 D6	Ability to interpret a large amount of complex information Ability to identify significant issues from complex data Good problem solving abilities Good English writing skills Good communication and listening skills Diplomacy in dealing with sensitive issues
	Desirable	F1	Experience of student body representation
Interpersonal skills	Essential	G1 G2 G3 G4 G5 G6	Ability to provide constructive criticism Good interviewing skills Ability to work in a team Ability to facilitate discussion to reach conclusions A courteous manner in verbal communications Absolute discretion in confidential matters
Special factors	Essential	H1 H2	Good university behavioural record Reference from tutor

Dec 2018

- Extract from minutes of PQSC meeting 19th April 2018:

ENQA update

1. Following the ENQA visitation from 10-12 April, the sub-committee was presented with the feedback that had been given by the visitation panel. There were a number of positives, as well as areas that the RCVS needed to work on, and it was expected that a full report would be sent to the College for a factual accuracy check in June 2018. It was noted that a final decision on accreditation would be expected around September/October 2018.
 2. One of the specific issues that was raised during the feedback session was the lack of student representation on RCVS committees. The ENQA team commented that students are undeniably one of the largest groups of stakeholders in the accreditation process and felt that there should be student involvement wherever possible. It was recognised that for RCVS Council this may present a challenge, as the membership is laid out in the Veterinary Surgeons Act, however for all other committees there were fewer barriers to student inclusion.
 3. Whilst the logistics of how students might be selected and trained, as well as issues around time commitments, had to be thoroughly considered, PQSC agreed in principle to the addition of a student observer on the sub-committee. It was suggested that it may be easier for a recent graduate to attend meetings, or possibly a student who was intercalating.
- Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee (PQSC) – Minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2019

Present:

Mr Alex Berry
Professor Malcolm Cobb
Dr Jerry Davies
Dr Mandisa Greene
Mrs Lynne Hill
Mrs Jo Oultram
Professor Susan Rhind
Mr James Statton
Mrs Clare Tapsfield-Wright – Chair

In attendance:

Mr Duncan Ash – Senior Education Officer
Dr Linda Prescott-Clements – Director of Education

Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed Mr Alex Berry and Mr James Statton onto the sub-committee as new student representatives, from Cambridge and Nottingham Veterinary Schools respectively.

Education Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2019

Present:

Professor Ewan Cameron
Mr Danny Chambers
Professor Susan Dawson – Chair
Ms Linda Ford
Mrs Andrea Jeffrey
Dr Susan (Sue) Paterson
Dr Cheryl Scudamore
Professor James Wood
Ms Katie Fox
Mr Tobias Hunter – Student representative
Student representative – Student representative

By invitation:

Dr Clare Tapsfield-Wright – PQSC Chairman
Professor Jill Maddison* – CertAVP Sub-Committee Chair
Professor Gary England – Chair of Specialist Sub-Committee
Mr Peter Robinson – Advanced Practitioner Panel Chair

In attendance:

Mr Duncan Ash – Senior Education Officer
Mrs Britta Crawford – Committee Secretary
Ms Jenny Soreskog-Turp – Senior Education Officer
Mr Jonathan Reid – Examinations Manager
Dr Linda Prescott-Clements – Director of Education
Ms Lizzie Lockett – CEO

Ops Board

Professor Stephen May – Observer

* Absent

Apologies for absence and welcome

4. The student members, Katie Fox and Tobias Hunter were welcomed to their first meeting. Apologies were received from Jill Maddison.

Visitation to Surrey University School of Veterinary Medicine

6 – 10 March 2017

List of Visitors

Professor Norman Williamson MVSc MANZCVS DipACT
Chairman of the Visitors

Mr David Black BVM&S DBR MRCVS
Production Animal Clinical Visitor

Professor Malcolm Cobb VetMB MA DVC PhD MBA MRCVS
Basic Sciences Visitor

Mrs Jill Nute BVSc MRCVS
Veterinary Public Health & Food Hygiene Visitor

Professor John Elmerdahl Olsen DVM PhD Dr.Vet.Sci
Para-clinical Studies Visitor

Dr Clare Tapsfield-Wright BVMS MRCVS
Companion Animal Clinical Visitor

Also present

Professor Sarah Baillie BVSc CertCHP BSc MRCVS
Observer

Miss Hannah Mason
Student visitor

Mrs Christine Warman
Director of Education, RCVS

Mr Jordan Nicholls
Senior Education Officer, RCVS

Appendix C

Thematic Analysis Policy

Aim

- To ensure the analysis of findings of external quality assurance activities across all accredited programmes.
- The qualitative analysis will both identify emerging themes as well as proactively identify topical themes across all accredited programmes.
- To ensure the general findings of RCVS quality assurance activities are shared to stakeholders and inform quality improvement.

Background

Thematic analysis is a generic term for the aspect of qualitative analysis that employs iterative procedures to enable the exploration of themes within data to achieve a coherent interpretation of the data. This methodology is frequently employed by health and education agencies in order to broaden or deepen the understanding of services.

Following the external review of the RCVS in 2018 by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), it was recommended that the RCVS developed a clear concept and plan for thematic analysis in order to meet fully the criteria for ESG (Quality Assurance in the European Higher-Education Area) standard 3.4.

Through its quality assurance activities, the RCVS generates a range of data from veterinary education establishments. Through appropriate analysis of this data, these findings can contribute towards the reflection of educational activities and on the improvement of quality assurance processes. A thorough and careful analysis will highlight developments, trends and areas of good practice within the regulated educational establishments, as well as any areas of persistent difficulty. Through the effective sharing of the general findings with stakeholders, relevant actions are identified and implemented.

Thematic Analysis Process

There is a range of data available to the RVCS from a variety of stakeholders, much of which has not been formally analysed. By completing a qualitative analysis of this data, and continuing with regular analysis, this data can be used to inform of trends and areas of good practice in order to influence future developments within both regulation and delivery of qualifications.

Sources of data:

- All institutions delivering veterinary and vet nursing degrees are subject to regular accreditation reviews, that are supported with a full written report. Veterinary Surgeon (VS) degrees have a maximum of 7 years between each full accreditation visit, and Veterinary Nursing (VN) degrees have a maximum of 5 years between visits. All education establishments are also required to provide annual self-assessment / monitoring reports. The reports request data from educational institutions that provide evidence for meeting the published standards.
- Following each accreditation visit, feedback is sought from the visiting team who carry out the accreditation, and the education establishment that was visited. This feedback and analysis will be used to develop the visit process
- Feedback from recent graduates, graduates who have been in employment for 2 years, and employers who have taken graduates as their first position within the industry.

Planned actions:	Action steps: (What will need to be done to implement the actions?)	Who is responsible	Resources needed in order to complete the action	Evidence: The result of completing the action
1. Data to be analysed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Carry out a thematic analysis of the last 2 accreditation reviews for each educational establishment (VS and VN) * Compare emerging themes for each VS and VN University. * Compare emerging themes for each standard * Analysis of feedback from visiting team and educational establishment that has been visited * Surveys sent to graduates and employers 	Quality Improvement Manager	<p>Completed accreditation reports</p> <p>Feedback from educational establishments and visiting teams</p> <p>Surveys of graduates and employers</p>	<p>Emergent themes for each educational establishment</p> <p>Emergent themes for each standard across all vet schools</p> <p>Emergent themes for each standard across each VN University</p> <p>Emergent themes from the visitation process</p> <p>Emergent themes from graduates and employers regarding their experiences.</p>
2. Frequency of analysis	<p>Analysis of current reviews of Vet Schools to be completed by early 2021. Following this, analysis to be carried out after each accreditation visit for both VS and VN universities</p> <p>Following this, analysis to be carried out after each accreditation visit for both VS and VN universities</p> <p>Analysis of feedback from graduates and employers to be completed regularly</p> <p>Annual comparison of standards across vet schools and VN universities</p>	Quality Improvement Manager	<p>Completed accreditation reports</p> <p>Feedback from educational establishments and visiting teams</p> <p>Feedback surveys from graduates and employers</p>	<p>Annual report of findings of accreditation cycle from 2021</p> <p>Report of findings following each graduate and employer survey</p>

Planned actions:	Action steps: (What will need to be done to implement the actions?)	Who is responsible	Resources needed in order to complete the action	Evidence: The result of completing the action
3. Publication and sharing of findings	<p>Thematic analysis to be shared with the Director of Education and the Director of Veterinary Nursing.</p> <p>Summary of findings to be reported to the Assessment and Risk Committee (ARC) for verification, as well as PQSC and the Education Committee for information, and VN Council</p> <p>Report to be reviewed by the Communications Department to professionalise graphics and layout.</p> <p>Report to be appropriately redacted and shared with stakeholders</p> <p>Report to be shared appropriately, either as a full report or in sections, through a variety of channels such as websites, relevant publications, podcasts, etc</p>	<p>Quality Improvement Manager</p> <p>Director of Education</p> <p>Director of Veterinary Nursing</p> <p>ARC, PQSC, EC, VNC</p> <p>Communications team</p>	<p>Completed thematic analysis of accreditation reports</p> <p>Completed thematic analysis of graduate and employer surveys</p>	<p>Findings of the analysis is shared with stakeholders</p>

Planned actions:	Action steps: (What will need to be done to implement the actions?)	Who is responsible	Resources needed in order to complete the action	Evidence: The result of completing the action
4. Actions resulting from findings	The findings of the thematic analysis of the accreditation reviews is used to feed back into the quality cycle of the educational establishments to highlight the trends and developments within the veterinary education sector and for the RCVS to offer support to overcome any persistent difficulties.	Quality Improvement Manager Director of Education Director of Veterinary Nursing	Completed action plan using the themes emerging from the thematic analysis	Recognition of action plans by educational establishments

Appendix D



