

---

# ENQA AGENCY REVIEW: ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS (RCVS)

---

OLIVER VETTORI, MAIKI UDAM, IVAN VARLYAKOV, AND REBECCA MAXWELL STUART  
17 OCTOBER 2018

---

# Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	3
INTRODUCTION.....	5
<b>BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>REVIEW PROCESS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM OF THE AGENCY .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>QUALITY ASSURANCE.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>RCVS.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>RCVS'S ORGANISATION/STRUCTURE .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>RCVS'S FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES, PROCEDURES .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>RCVS'S FUNDING.....</b>	<b>12</b>
FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF RCVS WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG).....	13
<b>ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>ESG 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>ESG 3.5 RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>ESG 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>ESG 2.6 REPORTING .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS .....</b>	<b>34</b>
CONCLUSION .....	38
<b>SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>OVERVIEW OF JUDGEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>38</b>

<b>SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>ANNEXES .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>ANNEX 1: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>ANNEX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>ANNEX 3: GLOSSARY.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>ANNEX 4. DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY RCVS IN SAR AND ON SITE .....</b>	<b>50</b>

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the review was to evaluate the way in which and to what extent the **Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)** fulfils *the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*.

The following activities of RCVS had to be addressed in the external review:

- Accreditation of veterinary degrees by RCVS
- Accreditation of Veterinary Nursing degrees by RCVS

RCVS is not a typical QA agency: it has a different history and a different constitution than most other agencies, so it took the review panel (also: “the panel” or “we”) some time to understand where the differences are relevant for the review. Many of the panel’s considerations do not comment on the quality of RCVS’s processes in absolute terms, but with regard to the requirements set in the ESG.

The panel found the self-assessment report (SAR) to be well structured and self-analytical. We also found plenty of evidence through interviews and additional documents that the relative weaknesses identified are taken seriously by the institution. Everyone we met seemed to be well aware of the self-assessment report (SAR) and of the areas for improvement mentioned there. Some progress has already been made, for example when it comes to the establishment of new appeals structures and processes.

RCVS is a professional organisation that conducts its business professionally and with great integrity. Everyone we met was well aware of the responsibility they were carrying. Arguably, it is a small profession but everything involved is very complex: complex structures, complex processes... This is even increased by the so called “justifiable differences” regarding procedures between veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses. Most structures and processes carry a lot of history, and RCVS finds itself in a bit of tension between doing justice to what has been before (and also laws and rules that stem from the past) and the willingness/need for change.

In driving forward this change, RCVS can rely on its considerable strengths:

- It is a very mature organisation that can build upon decades of experience and considerable achievements and works as an independent body in their field.
- RCVS shows a spirit geared towards learning and improvement all across the institution and a professionally driven awareness of the importance of quality assurance: it is truly a learning organisation, very self-aware and conscious of its relevant environment
- The organisation seems to have a dedicated and experienced staff as well as professional and clearly engaged members in the Council and the various committees. Integrity and professionalism seem to be core values.
- RCVS has largely developed a sound and robust methodology aimed at training the best graduates (“day one competences”) that is well implemented and seems to be met with a high level of satisfaction and acceptance by the concerned parties.
- The institution is in a very favourable resource situation with a positive outlook, aided by a thorough budgeting process and regular risk assessment exercises.
- RCVS is actively communicating its activities and achievements, seems to be engaged in a constant dialogue with the stakeholders it deems relevant and is very transparent in its processes and outcomes. All stakeholders interviewed made their trust in RCVS explicit.
- We found clear documentation and a commendable approach towards transparency, making almost all important documents and decisions available to the public.

Yet, while trying to understand RCVS better and also view the organisation through the lens of the ESG, we also found a couple of issues that might need some (re)consideration and could be improved/further developed:

- There is no comprehensive QA policy that would help stakeholders outside of RCVS to understand the scope of their QA activities and how they are conducted and with what aim.
- The methodologies are sound, though with still considerable differences in the processes and activities between the area of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nursing. We appreciate the changes that have already been implemented in order to support convergence between the approaches, but would also like to encourage RCVS to work even more strongly towards acknowledging internal quality assurance as part 1 of the ESG seem only to be covered to some degree in the reviews, especially when it comes to Veterinary Nursing.
- Consistency of outcomes/processes seems to be achieved through the comprehensive committee structure including functional redundancies, but is not, to our knowledge, based on clear and transparent criteria that would also lead to the same decisions if the people involved did not know the respective institutions so well. Some inconsistencies between visit and final decision were also felt from the perspective of higher education institutions during the previous accreditation round, but they also see RCVS's willingness to improve its procedures.
- We found a rather small pool of reviewers when it comes to accrediting Veterinary Nursing programmes. We know that this is already being improved, but want to encourage RCVS to move from an inspection/examination approach to a real enhancement-oriented peer visit also in this field.
- We found some initial ideas and a good data basis, but no clear concept/time plan yet with regard to thematic reports. It is also not clear to us who would take responsibility for the thematic reports, considering they will take time and require a specific kind of expertise.
- In a similar way we still consider internal quality assurance (IQA) as an area for improvement. The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) plays a very important role for IQA approaching it from a risk assessment perspective but so far there seems no clear concept for developing IQA beyond an increase of feedback instruments; and responsibilities are not completely clear yet. In other words: who is wearing the QA hat?
- Last but not least, despite the impressive level of communication at RCVS and a well-developed discursive culture, stakeholder involvement is largely built on the existing committees and sub-committees. In this regard, it is worth mentioning, that no students are involved in any of the governance structures, although they are now a member of every visiting panel. Regarding the fact that students are core stakeholders when it comes to quality assurance and that student involvement is rapidly becoming a cornerstone of many developments in the European Higher Education Area, we want to encourage RCVS to even more actively approach this opportunity.

The panel's judgements are provided below.

Table 1. Review Panel's Judgements

ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE	Substantially compliant
ESG 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS	Fully compliant
ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE	Fully compliant
ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS	Partially compliant
ESG 3.5 RESOURCES	Fully compliant
ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT	Substantially compliant

ESG 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES	Fully compliant
ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE	Substantially compliant
ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE	Fully compliant
ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES	Fully compliant
ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS	Substantially compliant
ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES	Partially compliant
ESG 2.6 REPORTING	Fully compliant
ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS	Fully compliant

Overall, we commend RCVS for all its achievements and for the internal quality culture it has developed over time. We appreciate its ambition to become a more active part of the European community of quality assurance professionals, but also strongly encourage the institution to also actively participate in the respective discourse and become more familiar with the way the ESG are interpreted and put into practice. In light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the review panel is satisfied that, in the performance of its functions, RCVS is in compliance with the ESG.

## INTRODUCTION

This report analyses the compliance of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG). It is based on an external review conducted between January 2018 (submission of SAR to the review panel) and June 2018 (submission of the review panel’s report to ENQA).

### BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

#### BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

ENQA’s regulations require all member agencies to undergo an external cyclical review, at least once every five years, in order to verify that they act in substantial compliance with the ESG as adopted at the Yerevan ministerial conference of the Bologna Process in 2015.

As this is RCVS’s first external review, the panel is expected to pay particular attention to the policies, procedures, and criteria in place, being aware that full evidence of concrete results in all areas may not be available at this stage.

#### REVIEW PROCESS

The 2018 external review of RCVS was conducted in line with the process described in the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference. The panel for the external review of RCVS was appointed by ENQA and composed of the following members:

- Oliver Vettori – Dean, Accreditations & Quality Management / Director Program Management & Teaching and Learning Support; WU – Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria; Chair of the panel, quality assurance professional (EUA nominee)

- Maiki Udam - Director of International Cooperation, Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA), Estonia; Secretary of the panel, quality assurance professional (ENQA nominee)
- Ivan Varlyakov – Professor, Agrarian Faculty, Trakia University - Stara Zagora, Bulgaria; Academic member (ENQA nominee)
- Rebecca Maxwell Stuart - PhD student in Business Management/Higher Education, Heriot-Watt University, The United Kingdom; Student member (ESU nominee)

During the review panel’s preparatory skype-meeting, which had been arranged by the ENQA review coordinator, each panel member was encouraged to use the ESG, in identifying evidence provided in SAR and supporting the conduct of the site visit. All review panel members submitted their comments and questions regarding the SAR’s alignment with the ESG to the Secretary in time before the site visit. Based on the feedback, the Secretary aligned the individual findings to the areas of inquiry. In consequence, they were linked to specific interview sessions.

Due to health issues, Professor Varlyakov was not able to participate in the site visit in person but his active contribution was assured through written comments and correspondence before the site-visit.

During the review panel’s kick-off session on-site, each panel member was designated to lead a specific interview session. During briefing sessions, the review panel checked repeatedly whether enough evidence had been collected for each standard of ESG. All panel members took notes during the interviews and shared them with the Secretary afterwards. During the final private meeting among panel members, all judgments, recommendations and suggestions on each standard were agreed collectively based on gathered evidence. After the site visit, the Secretary collated an initial draft reflecting the agreements reached on-site. The draft was circulated among panel members and finalized based on their written comments. Professor Varyakov did not participate in report-writing as he was absent from the site visit and lacked the evidence that was available on site.

The report reflects information gained from the SAR, interviews during the site visit, and the additionally provided documentation on site. RCVS had the opportunity to comment on the factual accuracy of the draft report.

### **Self-assessment report**

RCVS produced a SAR, which provided the first evidence that the review panel used to draw its conclusions. The review panel received the SAR from the ENQA review coordinator in January 2018. Overall, the report addressed the relevant components following the report template as provided by ENQA. The panel found the report to be well structured and self-analytical and also found plenty of evidence through interviews and additional documents that the relative weaknesses identified are taken seriously by the institution. There were some nuances that needed further clarifications during the site visit (e.g. the structure of RCVS and responsibilities of different units) but in general the SAR provided a sound starting point for discussions on the extent to which RCVS adheres compliance to the ESG.

Everyone we met seemed to be well aware of the self-assessment report (SAR) and of the areas for improvement mentioned there. Some progress has already been made, for example when it comes to the establishment of new appeals structures and processes.

## **Site visit**

The agenda for the site visit was prepared jointly between the Chair, the Secretary and RCVS's contact persons. Despite the fact that the final agenda had been agreed, in some interview sessions changes occurred during the site visit. The agenda, provided as Annex 1 to this report, identifies all interview partners, who actually participated in the meetings.

The site visit took place at RCVS's office premises between April 10 to 12, 2018. The work of the review panel started with an intensive kick-off meeting in the afternoon of April 10, 2018. The review panel did not use the opportunity to hold a preliminary meeting with the contact persons of the RCVS, instead they used the first evening for the meeting with the top management of RCVS (CEO and Presidential Team).

On April 11 and 12, 2018, the review panel met with the SAR preparation team, RCVS Council, RCVS's senior staff, representatives of HEIs, review pools and other external stakeholders. The review panel appreciated the openness of the interviewees and benefited a lot from all discussions.

The review panel would like to thank RCVS's contact persons and staff for all the time and effort invested in this review, for providing the panel with everything they needed for their work and for making them feel welcome and cared for. Finally, the review panel appreciated the support of the ENQA coordinator during the whole process.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM OF THE AGENCY**

### **HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM**

As the RCVS is the statutory regulator of the veterinary professions in the UK – veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses - in this chapter we are focusing on the education system of these particular professions only. According to the SAR, the two professions have historically developed separately and have different legal foundations.

Professional veterinary degrees for veterinary surgeons are five or six years in length and are delivered in universities. Four year graduate entry routes are also available for students holding a relevant undergraduate degree. Veterinary surgeon degree programmes are set at Level 7 of both the Higher Education Qualifications Framework, and the European Qualifications Framework. There are currently eight universities offering veterinary degrees in the UK, seven of which are RCVS accredited and one new school, which has not yet been accredited at the time of this review.

Veterinary nursing degrees are usually three to four years in length for foundation degrees (FdSc) and Bachelor of Science Degrees (BSc) respectively. They are delivered in Higher Education Institutions. Veterinary nursing degrees are set at levels 5 and 6 in both the Higher Education Qualifications Framework, and the European Qualifications Framework.

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

In the UK, all universities are subject to overall quality assurance monitoring by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The QAA is responsible for advising government (through the Privy

Council<sup>1</sup>) on the granting of degree awarding powers to institutions of higher education, as well as overseeing universities' quality assurance systems for the award of degrees. QAA also provides guidance on the minimum threshold academic standards a student must achieve to be eligible for the award of a degree, in accordance with the national qualification frameworks. In the UK, higher qualification levels are set out in QAA's "UK Quality Code for Higher Education – The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies".

According to the SAR, RCVS is recognised as a Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) by the QAA, and takes part in a collaborative forum of Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies with the QAA in order to share best practice on accreditation, and facilitate the mutual exchange of relevant information relating to quality, making regulation more efficient and reducing duplication. A pre-condition for approval of their veterinary degrees is that veterinary schools must be part of an institution of higher learning accredited by an organisation recognised for that purpose by its country's government. RCVS only considers veterinary schools for approval, which are part of a university with government awarded authority to award degrees.

The panel learned from the interviews on site that when QAA moved in the beginning of this century from training (programme) accreditation to institutional audit and thematic analysis, university teachers and professional bodies, including RCVS, did not receive relevant and sufficient information about their profession any more. Therefore, professional bodies became more active in taking over the role of accreditors.

According to the RCVS website (<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/accrediting-primary-qualifications/accrediting-veterinary-degrees/visitations/>), veterinary schools were visited by QAA subject review teams during 1999 / 2000. In 2001, RCVS collaborated with the QAA and the (then) six UK veterinary schools to produce the Benchmark Statement for Veterinary Science which describes what a veterinary degree should cover, lists the knowledge and skills included within the courses and also includes an early version of our 'essential competences'.

RCVS routinely shares its accreditation information with QAA, as well as takes into account QAA's reports on institutions during its own accreditation activities. RCVS expects all universities offering veterinary surgeon and veterinary nursing programmes to meet all of QAA's quality assurance requirements, including complying with the national qualifications frameworks and other guiding principles, e.g. ESG, designed to ensure comparability in standards and quality of higher education qualifications. RCVS also expects the universities it monitors to comply with the QAA subject Benchmark Statements and QAA codes of practice.

For overseas veterinary schools accredited by RCVS, the veterinary surgeon degree awarded must be recognised as a professional qualification for veterinary surgeons by the relevant authorities (government and/or veterinary licensing body) in its own region/country.

## RCVS

RCVS was established in 1844 by Royal Charter to be the governing body of the veterinary profession in the United Kingdom. Its statutory duties operate under primary national legislation and are

---

<sup>1</sup> The Privy Council is the mechanism through which interdepartmental agreement is reached on those items of Government business which, for historical or other reasons, fall to Ministers as Privy Counsellors rather than as Departmental Ministers. (<https://privycouncil.independent.gov.uk/>)

currently laid out in the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) 1966. RCVS is also designated as the “Competent Authority” for the veterinary profession under European Union legislation.

Under the RCVS Supplemental Royal Charter 2015, powers are granted for the setting of standards for the training and education of persons wishing to be entered in the register of veterinary nurses. It is this Charter that outlines the status of veterinary nurses as Associates of the College, and the Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC) as the body which sets training and education standards for veterinary nurses.

As the sole statutory regulator for the profession in the UK, the RCVS is responsible under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 for maintaining the register of veterinary surgeons eligible to practise in the UK, setting standards for veterinary education and regulating the professional conduct of veterinary surgeons.

The RCVS also exercises powers under its Royal Charter to award Fellowships and postgraduate specialist Diplomas and Certificates to veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and others.

According to the SAR, ‘Veterinary surgery’ as an area of work is protected by the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. This means that activities described as veterinary surgery can only be carried out by veterinary surgeons, with some exemptions. Veterinary surgeons must be registered with the RCVS in order to practise in the UK and have the initials ‘MRCVS’ (for Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons) or ‘FRCVS’ (for Fellow) after their names. The title ‘veterinary surgeon’ is protected by law: only those who are registered with the RCVS can use the title. With rights come responsibilities, and the same legislation that protects the veterinary profession also lays down the way in which the profession should be regulated. The title ‘veterinary nurse’, and the letters ‘RVN’, should only be used by those who have completed an approved veterinary nurse training course and are registered with the RCVS. There was a campaign to legally protect the title ‘veterinary nurse’ but this has not yet succeeded due to the current government’s reluctance to introduce further regulation.

#### **RCVS’S ORGANISATION/STRUCTURE**

RCVS’s statutory and Charter duties are steered and governed by RCVS Council (the Council) of 42 members that meets three times a year. The Council is the most senior committee, which governs all the activities of the RCVS and ensures that all activities meet required standards.

The breakdown of Council members is as follows:

- 24 members: elected to Council by the profession itself
- 14 members: two nominated to Council by each of the seven UK Veterinary Schools
- 4 members: appointed by the Privy Council

The composition of the Council is defined in the Veterinary Surgeons Act. Officially no veterinary nurses belong to the Council, although in fact there is currently one representative of veterinary nurses filling a vet school place. Students have no seats in the Council. The Veterinary Surgeons Act is currently in the process of change and from July 2018 the Council will be smaller and contain also two formal places for veterinary nurses.

RCVS Council is supported by a system of committees, sub-committees and working parties, on which sit various members of Council and other appointed individuals. RCVS policy issues put forward by working parties or the secretariat go first to committees for recommendation and, if recommended, on to Council for approval or rejection.

The committees relevant for this review are presented below.

**Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)** will have oversight of the quality assurance processes as they relate to accreditation of veterinary nursing and veterinary degrees. The role of the ARC is one of assurance. This involves monitoring of reports and evidence demonstrating that RCVS is following its internal quality assurance procedures. It does not involve carrying out quality assurance activities, which are carried out by other committees.

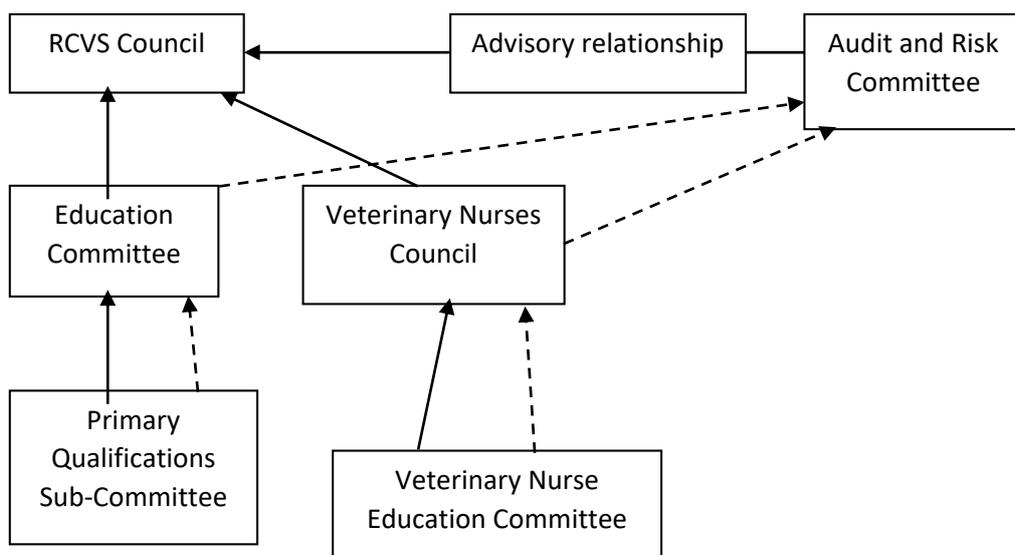
**Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC)** was established in 2002. Despite its name, it is also a committee. It comprises veterinary nurses, veterinary surgeons and lay people. VNC has overall responsibility for all matters concerning veterinary nurse training, post-qualification awards and the registration of qualified veterinary nurses. Veterinary nursing education decisions and monitoring have been devolved to the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee. Accreditation decisions are made by VNC based on the proposal of the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee.

**Education Committee (EC)** approves/accredits veterinary surgeon degrees, oversees the accreditation processes and makes final accreditation decisions for Veterinary Schools (surgeons).

**Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee (PQSC)** was created to manage the accreditation process of approving veterinary degrees, and consider reports of visitors (including follow-up reports) to veterinary schools, making recommendations to the Education Committee on recognition of undergraduate veterinary degrees.

**Veterinary Nurse Education Committee (VNEC)** is tasked with setting standards for veterinary nurse education and training, accrediting higher education institutions to award veterinary nursing professional qualifications, and monitoring the quality and delivery and assessment of veterinary nursing degrees.

Graph 1 illustrates the relationships between RCVS committees.



Graph 1. Relationships between RCVS committees

## **RCVS'S FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES, PROCEDURES**

As in the SAR, regulation of the professional conduct of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses is one of the primary statutory duties of the RCVS. RCVS publishes a "Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons" and a "Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses", by which both professions must abide. Failure to comply with the code of conduct can result in disciplinary action, overseen by the RCVS, against the individual veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse. This could lead to the removal of their name from the RCVS register of members or RCVS register of veterinary nurses, thereby removing their right to practise their profession.

RCVS awards a range of qualifications for both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses. For veterinary nurses, RCVS awards the Advanced Diploma in Veterinary Nursing qualification. For veterinary surgeons, RCVS awards the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice, which is a postgraduate modular certificate programme, set at Level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

In addition to postgraduate qualifications, RCVS also grants both 'Advanced Practitioner' and 'Specialist' status to veterinary surgeons, which are official recognitions of a veterinary surgeon's particular knowledge and skills in a designated field of veterinary practice. RCVS also awards its Fellowship (FRCVS), to those who have made significant contributions to the veterinary profession. These latter activities are not in scope to this review.

Setting and monitoring the standards for the education of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses is a key responsibility of the RCVS. The Veterinary Surgeons Act specifies that those who hold a veterinary degree from a UK veterinary school, which has received a Privy Council Recognition Order, are entitled to be registered as Members of the RCVS. Only Members of the RCVS have the legal right to practise veterinary surgery in the UK. Membership of the RCVS therefore constitutes the UK "licence to practise" for veterinary surgeons. The Act gives the RCVS the duty to supervise courses of study followed by students training to be veterinary surgeons in the UK, and specifies that the RCVS can appoint visitors to visit universities and to observe examinations. In addition to visiting universities, the Act allows the RCVS to request other information from universities "as to the course of study and examinations leading to the degree to which the recognition order relates". Under this provision, RCVS is able to monitor standards at UK universities on a regular basis, not just through the formal process of periodic accreditation visits.

The RCVS defines the competences that need to be met by the new graduate, and specifies the requirements for veterinary surgeon and veterinary nursing degree courses to be approved for registration purposes. The RCVS undertakes formal visitations to higher education institutions to ensure that veterinary degree standards are being maintained and, for UK universities, reports the recommendations to the Privy Council.

RCVS accreditation of veterinary surgeon and veterinary nursing programmes both involve the completion of a self-evaluation report by the institution before the visit, site visits to the institutions, completion of a report by visitors recording the institution's degree of compliance with RCVS published standards, the opportunity for the institution to provide comment on the report, and review and decisions on accreditation made by RCVS committees. Accredited institutions submit an annual monitoring report which is considered by the appropriate committee and in addition for veterinary nursing degrees there are annual quality assurance activities which can include site visits, telephone interviews and desk based research. The RCVS Audit and Risk Committee has oversight of

the whole quality assurance process. Due to the differences in the education and training models, there are also some differences in detail between veterinary and veterinary nurse quality assurance activities, however, accreditation of veterinary surgeon and veterinary nurse programmes broadly follow the same principles.

As of international activities related to veterinary surgeon training and accreditation, RCVS works collaboratively with several international agencies: in Europe with the European Association of Establishments of Veterinary Education (EAEVE), in Australia and New Zealand with the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC), in the U.S.A and Canada with the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), and in South Africa with the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC). RCVS invites visitors and observers from these other international agencies to join its visitation teams and in some circumstances, undertakes joint visitations with these agencies.

For overseas accreditation activities organised by the RCVS, the processes are, according to the SAR, the same as those used for UK visitations, except publishing the assessment reports. RCVS does not publish the reports from overseas visitations when they are confidential in their home countries.

Where RCVS sends visitors on international visitations that are organised and run by international accrediting agencies, the processes used are those of the host accreditor. Work undertaken through the International Accreditors Working Group has resulted in alignment of both standards and accreditation processes. Following the visit, the report is considered by RCVS committees independently from the international agencies and RCVS makes its own accreditation decision based on the findings from this report.

The Accreditation Committee for Veterinary Nurse Education (ACOVENE) is a voluntary organisation that was founded in 2007 to accredit veterinary nurse education programmes in the EU. It currently has over 70 accredited programmes from five European countries, ten of these programmes are outside the UK. The Director of Veterinary Nursing at the RCVS is the Chair of the ACOVENE, and the RCVS currently provides the secretariat.

#### **RCVS'S FUNDING**

According to the SAR and interviews on site, the RCVS is a financially stable organisation, operating with a financial surplus. The majority of its income is derived from annual registration fees from veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses practising in the UK.

In addition, veterinary nursing institutions are charged for accreditation activities. Overseas veterinary schools are charged an accreditation fee. UK veterinary schools (surgeons) are not charged because accreditation of this particular profession is a statutory duty of RCVS.

# FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF RCVS WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG)

## ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

### ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance 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.

#### Evidence

RCVS is a complex organisation with various responsibilities related to the veterinary professions.

RCVS's mission statement, that is published on their website, is as follows: "The role of the RCVS is to safeguard the health and welfare of animals committed to veterinary care through the regulation of the educational, ethical and clinical standards of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, thereby protecting the interests of those dependant on animals, and assuring public health. It also acts as an impartial source of informed opinion on relevant veterinary matters."<sup>2</sup>

The strategic plan 2017-2019 "Leadership, innovation and culture changes" contains *five ambitions*<sup>3</sup>:

A: Learning culture

B: Leadership and innovation

C: Continuing to be a First-rate Regulator (continuing to build on the foundations that have already been laid, we will work to ensure that the legislation and regulations that support us are not only fit for purpose today, but enable us to make the UK veterinary professions, and those allied professionals who work alongside them, the best that they can be into the future)

D: Global reach (to improve animal health and welfare on an international basis by raising veterinary standards overseas, contributing to the improvement of the One Health agenda and ensuring that our regulation keeps pace in a global market)

E: Our service agenda. The activities under ambitions are not explicitly connected to accreditation, except under ambition D (consider the global market for the RCVS accreditation of undergraduate veterinary education, particularly in the light of Brexit; investigate the global market for the RCVS accreditation of veterinary practices) and to some extent under ambition C (review outcomes for graduates, with consideration of the likely requirements from the profession and the public of the vets of tomorrow).

One of the primary roles under the College's Royal Charter and the Veterinary Surgeons Act is to set and monitor standards for veterinary education. In order to achieve this the RCVS undertakes

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/how-we-work/the-role-of-the-rcvs/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/how-we-work/the-role-of-the-rcvs/strategic-plan/>

visitations to HEIs offering the veterinary surgeon or veterinary nurse degrees to quality assure whether these courses meet the required standards set out by the RCVS.

As a quality assurance agency, RCVS accredits veterinary surgeon and veterinary nurse degree courses. It undertakes on average 1-2 visitations a year to UK universities offering the veterinary surgeon degree, and about the same number of overseas visitations depending on the schedules of those international accrediting agencies that RCVS collaborates with. This cycle of accreditation is repeated every three to seven years, depending on the outcome of the previous visitation, and could be yearly should the situation warrant it.

For the Veterinary Nursing higher education institution accreditation, RCVS conducts approximately three to four visitations a year to UK institutions. This cycle is repeated every five years.

Stakeholders are involved in the governance and work of the RCVS through their membership of RCVS Council committees, through working parties, through collaboration with the Veterinary Schools Council (a separate organisation whose board includes the Heads of each UK veterinary school), and through direct contact with each individual Veterinary Nursing school. Other representative bodies within the professions would also be consulted, for example, British Veterinary Nursing Association, British Veterinary Association and its species divisions.

Following the Veterinary Surgeons Act, the main stakeholders in the RCVS Council and committees are nominees of veterinary schools (especially surgeons) and elected members by the profession, i.e. practicing surgeons. In addition, both the RCVS Council and committees include independent lay persons (nominees of the universities and the Privy Council) who provide objective non-professional perspective and scrutiny of the governance. The Veterinary Surgeons Act is under revision and from July 2018 the amendments regarding the composition of the Council are expected to come into force. The main changes include the smaller number of council members as well as official inclusion of two representative veterinary nurses.

There are no students in the governing bodies. According to the interviews, students are involved formally in the visiting panels and informally in various lower-level discussions, for example, they were asked for feedback at the development of “Day One Competences” and they are also engaged in the working group of the Graduate Outcomes Programme. In both cases only veterinary surgeon students were involved. Students expressed their interest in being more engaged in governance of the RCVS.

### **Analysis**

The RCVS seems to be well respected by veterinary schools, colleges and professional associations/employers in the UK and abroad. Its duties to set and safeguard standards for veterinary surgeons and nurses are defined in the College’s Royal Charter and the Veterinary Surgeons Act. Within the scope of the ESG, the RCVS undertakes regularly the following activities: accreditation of veterinary degrees and accreditation of Veterinary Nursing degrees, which is in accordance with the ESG standard under review.

The RCVS has a clear mission statement and an ambitious strategic plan for 2017-2019 but it does not explicitly define RCVS’s role in quality assurance, with exception of the ambition to investigate the global market for its accreditations and to review the graduates’ outcomes. Therefore, the review panel recommends to add a more comprehensive QA policy to the next strategic plan or the development of a separate QA policy document that would help stakeholders outside the RCVS to understand the aim and scope of its QA activities.

Although both the RCVS Council and committees contain most of the important stakeholders from educational institutions and the labour market, there are no students involved at the decision-making level. Regarding the fact that students are core stakeholders when it comes to quality assurance, and that student involvement is rapidly becoming a cornerstone of many developments in the European Higher Education Area, the review panel wants to encourage the RCVS to open its Council and committees to students – including both surgeons and nurses - as well. If there are statutory restrictions to engage them officially, they might participate as lay people.

As the representation of veterinary nurses is currently not supported by the Veterinary Surgeons Act, the review panel welcomes the plan to involve them as formal appointed/elected members in the future Council.

### **Panel recommendations**

- 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.

### **Panel conclusion: Substantially compliant**

### **ESG 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS**

Standard:

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

### **Evidence**

The RCVS was created by virtue of a Royal Charter of 1844, superseded by the supplemental charters of 1967 and 2015. The latter reaffirmed the RCVS’s role and functions it may undertake in relation to veterinary education and brought veterinary nurses into full regulation under RCVS.

The RCVS is the sole statutory regulatory body for the veterinary profession in the United Kingdom of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (UK). It operates under primary national legislation (Item 1, The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966), and is also designated as the “Competent Authority” for the veterinary profession under European Union legislation (VSA, Section 1a).

Its role as a Chartered regulator is to set, uphold and advance the educational, ethical and clinical standards of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses. Under the VSA, its primary roles are:

- a) to keep the register of veterinary surgeons eligible to practise in the UK,
- b) set and monitor standards for veterinary education, and
- c) regulate the professional conduct of veterinary surgeons through its Disciplinary Committee procedures.

The RCVS’s authority and statutory obligation to accredit veterinary schools comes under primary national legislation, the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. Section 3 of the Act specifies that those who hold a degree from a UK veterinary school that has received a recognition order are entitled to be registered as Members of the RCVS. Only Members of the RCVS have the right to practise veterinary

surgery in the UK. Membership of the RCVS therefore constitutes the UK “licence to practise” for veterinarians.

The activities of veterinary nurses are covered by Schedule 3 of the VSA, 1966. This sets out the professional and clinical jurisdiction of registered and student veterinary nurses, from which relevant veterinary nurse competences have been developed.

The 2015 Charter also gave authority to the Veterinary Nurses' Council (VNC) to set standards for veterinary nurse education, training and conduct. Under the RCVS Supplemental Royal Charter 2015, section 14, powers are granted for the setting of standards for the training and education of persons wishing to be entered in the register of veterinary nurses. It is this Charter that outlines the status of veterinary nurses as associates of the College, and the Veterinary Nurses Council as the body which sets training and education standards for veterinary nurses.

### **Analysis**

As the sole statutory regulatory body for the veterinary profession in the UK, the RCVS is a mature organisation functioning on a solid legal basis. The outcomes of RCVS's activities, including accreditation, are accepted by the higher education institutions, professionals in the field and other stakeholders.

**Panel conclusion: Fully compliant**

### **ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE**

Standard:

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

### **Evidence**

RCVS is an autonomous organisation independent of government, universities and any other veterinary organisations. The Veterinary Surgeons Act and Royal Charter determine the functions of the RCVS, which ensures independence from the institutions which it evaluates.

RCVS is not reliant on other organisations for its finances, as it derives most of its income from the annual registration (licence to practise) fees of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses. Accreditation of UK veterinary surgeons degrees is a statutory obligation of RCVS and not charged from the HEIs, while accreditation of veterinary nurses degrees is financially covered by the accredited institutions.

RCVS visitors appointed to university accreditation visit teams act on behalf of the College and not on behalf of their constituent organisations. Their role is to assess whether an institution is meeting the RCVS standards of accreditation and report back their findings to RCVS committees, who use this information to make a judgement on the accreditation status. The RCVS visitor panel contains individuals from all spheres of the veterinary professions ranging from university academics to practitioners in corporate or private practice. Personal interests are discouraged to ensure that procedures and decisions are based on visitors' expertise and not interests which may conflict with RCVS values and processes of accreditation. Prior to the visit, all visitors are obliged to attend training where their role and behaviour during the visit is discussed.

RCVS has a clear no-conflict-of-interest policy for both visitors and decision-makers. Visitors are required to declare that they have no conflicts of interest when joining a visitation team, so that they can operate impartially without any prejudice towards the university being accredited.

The process of decision-making is multi-leveled, starting with the proposal from the visitation team to the respective sub-committee - Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee for veterinary surgeons and Veterinary Nurse Education Committee for veterinary nurses – and after discussions on the sub-committee level the accreditation proposals are forwarded to the Education Committee (veterinary surgeons) and Veterinary Nurses Council who make the final accreditation decisions.

Where a member of a committee or sub-committee involved in the accreditation process has acted as part of the visitation team or has other links to the university under discussion, they leave the room and therefore would play no part in the making of recommendations on accreditation status.

During the interviews with visitors and HEIs it was confirmed that there has never been any problem with impartiality of visitors or decision-making.

The Audit and Risk Committee assesses regularly the possible risks regarding independence and impartiality of processes and people. In addition, HEIs or other interested parties have the opportunity to address the Privy Council when they feel that outcomes or processes have been influenced by any third party.

### **Analysis**

The RCVS's organisational and professional independence is ensured by legislative acts and structural redundancies.

The RCVS is aware that there are a limited number of professionals and experts in the field, and in most cases they are inter-related through work, former studies, membership in RCVS's Council or committees etc. Under the given circumstances, the RCVS has made great efforts and achieved good results in minimizing the possible risks of partiality regarding visitors and decision-making. This has been achieved through a high level of organisational integrity and transparency, a clear no-conflict-of-interests policy and two-level decision-making processes: outcomes are discussed both on sub-committee and committee level. Therefore, the review panel can conclude also that independence of formal outcomes is ensured.

**Panel conclusion: Fully compliant**

### **ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

Standard:

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

### **Evidence**

RCVS publishes reports on veterinary surgeon degrees and from 2018 also on veterinary nurses degrees. Both from the SAR and from interviews it became clear for the review panel that RCVS has hitherto not conducted any analysis about the findings of their external quality assurance activities based on the reports or other evidence.

During the interview with the CEO and the current and future presidents the review panel learned that there are ideas and potential to start with analysis in the nearest future.

The RCVS staff and Council members have had an initial brainstorming during which they already have come up with topics and plans for thematic analysis. For example, during last 5 years RCVS has conducted interviews about outcomes assessment and work placement. The Graduate Outcomes Project is expected to be ready by mid-2019 and the project outcomes will be published after that.

The review panel was informed that RCVS is planning to hire a new research officer and the main responsibility for thematic analysis will lie with the Audit and Risk Committee. However, when interviewing ARC, they seemed to be surprised and not aware of such plans. ARC said that they would push this responsibility back as thematic analysis would be more of an executive task.

Despite some confusion related to thematic analysis, RCVS publishes extensively about its activities on their website: newsletters, annual reports, guidances, RCVS facts etc.<sup>4</sup>

### **Analysis**

Already during the self-evaluation process, the RCVS found thematic analysis as one of their improvement area that they need to address in the nearest future. During the years, lots of data has been gathered but most of it has not been used or analysed.

The review panel witnessed sufficient potential regarding the data, enthusiasm of the RCVS staff as well as some initial plans for coming years. However, the plans should be developed further and made more specific.

At the moment, the division of roles and responsibilities regarding thematic analyses seems unclear for everyone at RCVS. The review panel agrees that it should be an executive responsibility, taken by permanent staff and not by any committee.

As it is the first review for RCVS and the College has already taken steps to start with systematic analysis in the nearest future, e.g. through data collection and internal discussions, the panel sees enough ground to find the agency partially compliant with regard to this standard. The panel has made it clear to RCVS, though, that a lot of work needs to be done to meet this standard at the next review.

### **Panel recommendations**

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

### **Panel conclusion: Partially compliant**

#### **ESG 3.5 RESOURCES**

Standard:

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/>

## Evidence

The review panel was informed both via the SAR and interviews that RCVS has 118 staff members, of whom 4-5 are directly involved in accreditation activities. RCVS also uses casual workers as examiners and office holders. Besides that, a considerable amount of work is done in various committees and sub-committees.

Human resource (HR) department manages a training budget that is £600-700 per head. There is an appraisal and re-appraisal scheme that is focused on development. Training that is applicable for larger groups of staff is done in-house, for example excel, mental health, time management, personal effectiveness, interview skills etc. Staff members are also encouraged to participate in professional organisations, their membership fees are paid by the RCVS.

The budgetary situation of the RCVS is very resilient. The RCVS operates with a financial surplus and healthy reserves. It has sufficient financial resource to operate its accreditation activities. Since RCVS is not funded by the UK Government, it is not subject to budget cuts by a higher authority, and thus is able to maintain its core functions via its income, the majority of which is derived from annual registration fees from veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses practising in the UK. Some of the interviewees mentioned that Brexit may be a risk for predicting future incomes as an essential number of graduates paying register fees are from outside the UK. The ARC explained that the risk is minimal because of the reserves that the RCVS has.

Total income for 2016 was £10.03m (in 2015, £9.49m). Expenditure for 2016 was £9.98m (in 2015, £9.18m).

Accreditation activities are given priority in budget planning, as the maintenance of education standards is one of the primary responsibilities of the RCVS.

Veterinary Nursing institutions and overseas veterinary schools are charged an accreditation fee.

## Analysis

The review panel is convinced that both human and financial resources in the RCVS are adequate and well managed. Recruitment and training system of staff assures appropriately skilled people for respective positions. The training budget is generous and supports people's development. The RCVS is operating with healthy reserves and accreditation activities are given priority in budget planning. The funds are allocated appropriately to various activities essential for a high-quality and sustainable agency, e.g., motivation package and improvement of staff, information events/materials for universities and colleges etc.

**Panel conclusion: Fully compliant**

### ESG 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.

## Evidence

The documents “Awarding Organisation and Higher Education Institution Handbook”<sup>5</sup> and “RCVS Accreditation Standards and procedures for the accreditation of veterinary degrees”<sup>6</sup> are published on the RCVS website and contain the details of the quality processes involved with the accreditation of veterinary degrees, and the accreditation of veterinary nurse qualifications.

The accreditation standards and procedures also set out standards for recruitment and training of visitors, which ensure that all those involved in its activities are competent and act professionally and ethically. Visitors normally attend a visit as an observer before joining a visit team as a full visitor. Visiting teams attend training before each visit and guidance for visitors is included in the “RCVS Standards and procedures for the accreditation of veterinary degrees” and the “Awarding Organisation and Higher Education Institution Handbook”. Both training and guidance include standards of behaviour expected of visitors.

The RCVS assures the competence and development of its permanent staff through training and an appraisal system.

The RCVS has organisational policies that guard against intolerance or discrimination of any kind within all its activities (“The way we work- RCVS culture”<sup>7</sup>). Staff are recruited in line with these policies and have qualifications and experience appropriate to their roles. Staff receive training and are encouraged to undertake further developmental activities to ensure their competence is maintained. RCVS visitors must also abide by the behavioural guidelines and conflict of interest policies in its visitation procedures handbooks.

RCVS has recently started to collect formal feedback from the accredited institutions and visiting teams of VS degrees. Coordinators of VN accreditation rely more on informal feedback – thank-you letters, phone calls – from the institutions.

According to the SAR, the RCVS does not use subcontractors for its accreditation work.

RCVS veterinary institution accreditation visit reports are in the public domain and are published on the RCVS website, so that previous decisions and reports are transparent. Accreditation reports for veterinary nursing institutions started to be published from January 2018. The minutes of Education Committee meetings and Veterinary Nurse Council meetings are published on the RCVS website, so that decision making is transparent. RCVS is subject to the Freedom of Information Act, and must release any further background documents on request. There is an appeals procedure and the ultimate check is that RCVS’s decisions as a public body may be legally challenged through the process of Judicial Review. This system of checks and balances guards against any risk of inconsistency in decision making.

As of international activities related to veterinary surgeon training and accreditation, RCVS works closely with several international agencies: The European Association of Establishments of Veterinary Education (EAEVE), the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC), the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), and the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC). It helps to make sure that also outside the UK only recognised institutions/programmes will be accredited. In some cases, RCVS undertakes joint visitations with the above-mentioned agencies.

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/awarding-organisation-and-higher-education-institution-handbook/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/accrediting-primary-qualifications/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/the-way-we-work/>

For overseas accreditation activities organised by the RCVS, the processes are, according to the SAR, the same as those used for UK visitations, except publishing the assessment reports. RCVS does not publish the reports from overseas visitations when they are confidential in their home countries.

Where RCVS sends visitors on international visitations that are organised and run by international accrediting agencies, the processes used are those of the host accreditor.

There is no one document describing the internal quality assurance (IQA) policies and responsibilities. During the self-assessment process, the RCVS itself discovered that IQA is one of the areas that needs more attention in the very near future. According to the SAR and interviews, internal processes are in place, but do not include any system for identifying themes and trends, or looking at whether the processes were operating as they should and continued to be fit for purpose.

The RCVS has already planned concrete activities to overcome this deficiency: introduction of work plans and annual reports that will be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee which is also responsible for overseeing the quality assurance processes as they relate to accreditation of veterinary nursing and veterinary degrees, and checks whether the RCVS is following its internal quality assurance procedures.

### **Analysis**

The RCVS applies high professional and ethical standards for its permanent staff and visitors, and has published accreditation standards and other documents (for example, minutes of the committees and the council) that make its activities fully transparent.

Formal feedback mechanisms from accredited institutions were recently introduced for VS degrees but there is still a reliance on informal communication at VN accreditation. The review panel advises the RCVS to develop an even more systematic approach for collecting feedback and to align the procedures for accreditations of VS and VN degrees whenever possible.

The review panel found a very reflective culture and high integrity in the RCVS, but the formal IQA policy was missing and responsibilities for introducing and maintaining the IQA system were still unclear. It would be worth to consider developing a policy document for IQA that includes the most important activities and defines the responsibilities.

### **Panel recommendations**

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

### **Panel suggestions for further improvement**

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.

### **Panel conclusion: Substantially compliant**

### ESG 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

Standard:

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

#### Evidence

As it is the first ENQA review for the RCVS, it is not relevant to assess this standard.

However, according to the SAR the RCVS has voluntarily participated in the United States Department of Education (USDE) review in 2015. In order for U.S. students to be eligible to participate in U.S. federal student aid programs, the veterinary medical school's accrediting agency must be approved by the USDE. In applying for accreditation, RCVS had to show how its standards and procedures complied with the "Guidelines for Requesting an Acceptability Determination for a Foreign Veterinary Accrediting Agency (Guidelines)". USDE department staff reviewed the processes and accreditation standards used by the RCVS, and determined that the RCVS had an acceptable quality assurance system for evaluating the quality of education offered at the veterinary schools it accredits. This process is cyclical, with re-accreditation occurring every six years and RCVS's next USDE review will be conducted in 2021.

In addition, the Accreditation Committee for Veterinary Nurse Education (ACOVENE) re-accredits the RCVS once every five years, via application as set out against the "ACOVENE Regulator Accreditation Criteria".

In its SAR, the RCVS expresses its readiness to undergo a formal cyclical external review by ENQA, should membership be granted following this initial review.

#### Analysis

Although it is the first time for the RCVS to undergo ENQA review, the College has successfully passed the voluntary review of USDE and is also accredited by ACOVENE. The next USDE review is going to take place in 2021.

**Panel conclusion: Fully compliant**

## ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

### ESG 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.

#### Evidence

According to the SAR, both the veterinary surgery and Veterinary Nursing standards for accreditation include a requirement for effective internal quality assurance processes within the institutions being accredited. The statement is supported by a matrix showing which standards in VS and VN accreditation cover the ESG standards in Part 1 (see the matrix below). It was also stated by the interviewees that all ESG IQA standards are covered during the accreditation of VN and VS degrees.

When reading the accreditation standards and accreditation reports, the review panel found supporting evidence regarding the VS degrees but did not find any clear reference to student-centred learning in VN accreditation standards and reports.

#### Analysis

The main aim of RCVS accreditation is to assure that all graduates have achieved “Day One Competences” and internal quality assurance (ESG Part 1) does not seem to be the biggest concern, especially regarding VN degrees.

However, the review panel found enough evidence from the SAR, accreditation standards and reports to conclude that for VS degrees all requirements of ESG Part 1 are met.

VN degree accreditation is more an inspection-type review, and the panel did not find any clear evidence for ESG Standard 1.3, especially about student-centred learning and teaching (respecting the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths, using different modes of delivery etc.) Although in the context of RCVS’s aims and responsibilities the accountability-oriented assessment is acceptable, we would recommend to develop VN accreditation methodology closer to the one of VS, and through this increase the focus on IQA, especially student-centred learning, also in VN reviews.

#### Panel recommendations

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

**Panel conclusion: Substantially compliant**

	VN Standard 1 The organisation	VN Standard 2 Sustainability	VN Standard 3 Qualification design and delivery	VN Standard 4 Qualification design and delivery	VN Standard 5 Assessment	VN Standard 6 Centre approval and quality management	VN Standard 7 Self evaluation and quality assurance	VS Standard 1 Organisation and reporting	VS Standard 2 Finances	VS Standard 3 Facilities and equipment	VS Standard 4 Animal resources	VS Standard 5 Information resources	VS Standard 6 Admission and progression	VS Standard 7 Academic and support staff	VS Standard 8 Research programmes, continuing and higher degree education	VS Standard 9 Assessment	VS Standard 10 Curriculum	VS Standard 11 Outcomes assessment		
<b>Part 1 of the ESG</b>																				
1.1 Policy for quality assurance			x	x	x	x		x					x				x	x	x	x
1.2 Design and approval of programmes			x	x	x	x					x						x	x		x
1.3 Student centred learning, teaching and assessment			x			x					x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x
1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification			x	x	x										x			x		
1.5 Teaching staff					x	x										x	x			x
1.6 Learning resources and student support			x			x	x				x	x	x	x	x			x		x
1.7 Information management									x											x
1.8 Public information					x										x					x
1.9 On-going mentoring and periodic review of programmes *																x		x	x	x
1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance**					x															x

## ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

Standard:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

### Evidence

RCVS has full statutory authority under the Veterinary Surgeons Act to set standards and operate the accreditation process for veterinary degrees. The standards are reviewed periodically: according to the SAR, the most recent revision of veterinary surgeon standards was completed in May 2016, and Veterinary Nursing standards in November 2016. The aim of accreditation is to ensure that institutions providing VS and VN degrees meet the set standards.

As stated in the SAR, revisions of the veterinary surgeon standards are discussed with the Veterinary Schools Council (VSC), which comprises the heads of all UK veterinary schools. This provides the VSC with the opportunity to contribute to the design and improvement of RCVS standards, and ensures that the aims of RCVS accreditation remain clear and coherent for all parties involved in the process.

Due to RCVS's tight contacts with other accrediting agencies around the world and participation in the International Accreditors Working Group (IAWG), the College continually benchmarks and improves its standards according to the international best practices.

The educational institutions and visiting experts can give feedback related to the standards both formally and informally. During the interview with the experts, an interviewee described how the visiting team modified an unclear accreditation rubric in the middle of the process and how it was welcomed and accepted by the RCVS.

The accreditation reports contain a series of commendations, recommendations and suggestions (VS), and areas of good practice, areas for improvement and actions required (VN), all aimed at assisting the schools in meeting the published standards of accreditation.

For VS degree accreditation, there is a formal two-month consultation period during the committee process (as laid out in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, Section 5, (4) (b)), during which time the university has an opportunity to comment and reflect on how they intend to meet the recommendations and suggestions and provide a formal response, which is considered by RCVS committees as part of the accreditation process. Veterinary schools are also encouraged to show continued improvement through their annual monitoring reports.

Veterinary Nursing accreditation activities are usually combined with the University's QAA validation events, to reduce the need for separate meetings and document reviews.

In the Veterinary Nursing accreditation report, a comment is made next to each subsection of every standard as set out in the veterinary nurse accreditation standards, and areas for action are identified at the front of the report based on the findings before and during the accreditation visit. Once this report is finalised, it is sent to the institution to check for factual accuracy and to agree the timeline for compliance with the actions identified (where applicable). The evidence is submitted, and a confirmation letter is sent to the institution to confirm this. The findings are then presented to the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee, which decides whether to grant or withhold provisional or continued accreditation.

Both VS and VN institutions need to present annual monitoring reports to the RCVS, which may raise a question of reasonable workload. During the interviews, the representatives of institutions did not oppose the need for annual reports; on the contrary, they welcomed the periodic opportunity to show their improvements.

### **Analysis**

The review panel found the aims and standards of external quality assurance fit for purpose. The main stakeholders – veterinary surgeons and nurses as well as all heads of UK veterinary schools – contribute to the design and improvement of RCVS standards.

In addition, the RCVS has demonstrated its willingness and flexibility to change the standards and rubrics based on the input from review panels.

Although the main aim of VS and VN accreditation is strongly related to accountability – e.g., to ensure animals’ welfare – both accreditations also give a series of proposals for further improvement.

All accredited institutions are asked for annual monitoring reports demonstrating their current state and improvements made.

### **Panel commendations**

- The RCVS is commended for its well-structured and systematic follow-up process that allows institutions to demonstrate their improvements based on experts’ recommendations between accreditations.

### **Panel conclusion: Fully compliant**

## **ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES**

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent
- an external assessment normally including a site visit
- a report resulting from the external assessment
- a consistent follow-up

### **Evidence**

As stated in the SAR, accreditation standards for both veterinary surgeon and veterinary nurse degrees have been developed over a number of years and are available in the public domain on the RCVS website. Both accreditation standards have common themes; however, Veterinary Nursing degrees are mostly delivered through a devolved system of further education colleges and training practices which necessitates further layers of standard setting in addition to the primary Awarding Organisation and Higher Education Standards. These can be found in the centre and training practice standards section in the “Awarding Organisation and Higher Education Institution Handbook”. “RCVS standards and procedures for the accreditation of veterinary degrees” can be found on the RCVS website.

Both VS and VN accreditation consist of self-evaluation reports, followed by a site visit.

The review panel was informed during an interview that in the case of a VN accreditation, the visit is organised jointly with a QAA panel that is put together by the university within the process of self-accreditation. However, there is no reference to it in the accreditation reports.

All findings of an accreditation are summarised in the accreditation report, complemented with commendations, recommendations and suggestions (VS), and areas of good practice, areas for improvement and actions required (VN).

For both VS and VN, the RCVS reporting process includes a stage of factual checking by the university. Once the report has been finalised by the visiting team, it is forwarded to the institution for a factual check, and once this has been completed and any factual changes made, the report is taken to RCVS committees for consideration.

Following review by RCVS Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee, the report is then sent back to the university. The Veterinary Surgeons Act provides that the university must have two months after receiving the final visit report in which to submit its comments and response to RCVS. It is at this stage that the university can consider the recommendations and suggestions made by RCVS and respond with their plans to address them. Once the University has submitted its response to RCVS, this is taken, together with the final visitation report, back to the Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee for consideration. At this stage the sub-committee makes a recommendation on the accreditation status, having taken everything into consideration, including the university's response to the recommendations and suggestions.

A fairly similar procedure is also valid for VN accreditation. Where there are significant actions required, the University will be invited, in addition to correct any factual mistakes, to complete an action plan detailing how they will be completed. This must include specific dates, together with the name of the responsible officer involved. The action plan must be received one month following receipt of the report. Actions set will have variable timelines, depending on their nature. Once the institutions have completed the actions required, a risk assessment is compiled for the university. The report and any additional evidence are then presented to the Veterinary Nurses Education Committee for accreditation decision.

As turned out from the interviews, the expert panels of VN accreditation can see the university's response and action plan, and comment on it if necessary. The panels of VS accreditation are not provided with the universities' responses.

The VS accreditation reports have always been published on RCVS's website; from 2018 this will also be the case with reports of VN.

Both VS and VN institutions need to present annual monitoring reports to the RCVS.

### **Analysis**

The RCVS has implemented all the necessary parts of external quality assurance: there is self-evaluation by the institutions, review visits by experts, published assessment reports, and clear and sound procedures for follow-up (see also ESG 2.2 in this report). Besides reports, the accreditation standards and procedures are also made public on RCVS's website.

To raise the responsibility of expert panels and make them more involved in the process, it might be worth sharing the universities' responses after accreditation with all panels, including VS.

## Panel suggestions for further improvement

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.

## Panel conclusion: Fully compliant

### ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

Standard:

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

### Evidence

According to the SAR, accreditation visits for both veterinary surgeon and veterinary nursing degrees are undertaken by expert teams with clear criteria for appointment, training, and policies for managing conflicts of interest. The requirements and procedures for appointing people to the visiting teams and the conflict of interest policy are defined in the *"RCVS standards and procedures for the accreditation of veterinary degrees"*<sup>8</sup>, and in the *"Awarding Organisation and Higher Education Institution Handbook"*<sup>9</sup>.

RCVS offers training days to all members of the site visit team, including new visitors and observers. The training provided is slightly differently for VS and VN visitor teams.

For VS visitors, the one-day training usually takes place around a month before the site visit and uses the institution's self-evaluation report as the basis for teaching about the standards and procedures of a visitation. This day also gives experienced visitors a chance to refresh their knowledge about how the visitation process works, as well as drawing out queries and questions about the self-evaluation report that the team will want to explore during the visitation. No new team member can attend as a visitor unless they have attended a training session or a briefing meeting prior to the visit. New members of a visit team must also normally have attended a visit as an observer to gain experience before being appointed as a full member. There is also an additional briefing one day before the visit. All visitors we met during the interview had passed the training and followed the first visit as observers. For international visitors, group teleconference briefing meetings are held a few weeks in advance of joint international visits to give the team an opportunity to meet and discuss initial impressions of the self-evaluation report from the university being visited. International team members of visit teams will normally have benefited from visitor training provided by their country's accrediting agency.

As there are fewer visitors for VN institutions, there is usually one training event for all experts of this year's accreditation.

The team of experts of VS accreditation comprises individuals with expertise in veterinary basic sciences, animal production, veterinary public health and food hygiene, and clinical studies. The

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/accrediting-primary-qualifications/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/awarding-organisation-and-higher-education-institution-handbook/>

RCVS strives towards making sure that the competences/skills of the visitors are diverse and well-balanced. At least one of the clinical visitors must be a veterinary surgeon in private practice. Visitors must hold a degree that is registerable with RCVS (except for visitors in basic sciences who must hold a PhD in their subject) or be a currently licensed veterinarian in good standing in another jurisdiction acceptable to RCVS. It is the responsibility of the Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee to put together/approve the visitation panels.

The visitation team comprises a chair of the visitors, who is responsible for leading the team during the visitation, visitors with the mix of expertise defined above, a student representative and where appropriate, one or more observers. The student will be nominated through the visitation team or through the Association of Veterinary Students (AVS). The student can be either studying on its final year or graduated up to 2 years ago. It was stated in the SAR that through RCVS's collaborative work with other accrediting agencies, experienced international visitors are almost always a part of a typical visitation team. It was also proved by the experts' list in the accreditation reports.

The RCVS conducts periodic revision of the visitors list, excluding inactive candidates. Recently the RCVS has started to ask for feedback from both visitors and accredited institutions about the accreditation process. So far the outcomes of feedback have not influenced the formation of panels.

VS visitors are responsible for writing the report, with each visitor assigned areas of responsibility relating to one or more of the Standards. Visitors act as either primary or secondary reporters on the standards assigned, so that the report is the culmination of more than one individual's findings. The student representative will normally contribute to the reporting on Standard 6 – Students, on matters relating to student welfare. Towards the end of the visitation, all visitors will have the opportunity to input to the full report across all Standards. Observers have no reporting responsibilities, as they are there either for training purposes or to oversee the visitation process. The chair has final authority on the content of the report. RCVS staff act as secretary to the visitation team, coordinating the reporting process and compiling the report as chapters are completed.

As for VN accreditation, the visitation teams are formed by the Senior RCVS Veterinary Nursing team. A visitor team consists of at least one member of the Senior RCVS Veterinary Nursing team, a visitor selected from a voluntary pool of experts, and a student representative. The student representative has been introduced to the panel very recently. Some accreditation reports that were provided to us indicated that just a couple of years ago the review panel consisted only of two members of RCVS senior staff.

VN accreditation reports are produced by the senior RCVS Veterinary Nursing team member. The other members of the visitation team contribute to the drafting of the report, collaborating on their areas of responsibility or expertise.

In the SAR and during the interviews, RCVS admitted that due to a relatively small pool of experts for veterinary education accreditation, it can be a challenge finding impartial professionals to serve the various committee activities, especially as a strict conflict of interest policy applies. The RCVS is continuously striving to retain impartial committee members, and to network with members and associates of the RCVS to recruit future suitable members. One method for achieving this

impartiality, proposed by the RCVS themselves, is through the use of lay members on committees, comprising professionals from other sectors.

During the self-evaluation process, the RCVS has recognised benefits of more unified approach to recruitment and training of VS and VN visitors.

### **Analysis**

RCVS has developed and implemented clear criteria for visitor appointment, training, and policies for managing conflict of interest.

The VS accreditation is supported by peers with the wide range of expertise, including a student representative, practitioner, and in most cases also an international expert.

Although recently the student member and an independent expert have been added to the VN visitors team, the composition of the team is still too narrow and relies too heavily on the senior staff of the RCVS. This format is more suitable for an inspection than for other forms of external quality assurance. The panel acknowledges RCVS's readiness to expand the VN pools further, and welcomes RCVS's plan to make VS and VN visitor recruitment and training more similar and comparable.

The review panel recognises RCVS's challenges finding impartial experts for visiting teams due to the limited number of professionals in the veterinary field. However, we saw the effort and commitment by the College to deal with this issue and appreciate their approach to selection and training of experts as well as to the strict and consistent no-conflict-of-interest policy. During our visit we did not find any evidence or indication that may jeopardize this policy.

### **Panel recommendations**

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

### **Panel conclusion: Substantially compliant**

## **ESG 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.

### **Evidence**

On the RCVS's website there are published criteria/options for both VS and VN accreditation decisions.

Options for decision on accreditation of veterinary surgeon degrees are as follows:

- a) **Accreditation for seven years** subject to the usual periodic (annual) reports. If periodic reports are satisfactory, re-accreditation will be subject to a visitation in the seventh year.

- 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.
- c) **Accreditation may be denied.** This category applies exceptionally where the RCVS considers that the deficiencies are so serious that they are unlikely to be rectifiable within a reasonable period of time. It is, in effect, a final warning to a school that if urgent action is not taken RCVS will move to terminal accreditation.
- d) **Terminal accreditation** may apply if the school is unable to meet RCVS's standards, and/or if a school voluntarily closes. For previously accredited UK veterinary schools where accreditation is denied by RCVS, the final decision to revoke or suspend their Recognition Order would be made by the Privy Council (see below). The procedures for terminal accreditation must be followed by the veterinary school. For non-UK schools, if accreditation is denied for a programme that was previously accredited, the school may be placed on "terminal accreditation" and it will be the responsibility of the school to present an immediate plan to RCVS for approval showing how the deficiencies will be addressed to allow adequate progress of the existing students to meet RCVS Day One Competences.
- e) **Accreditation is denied.** This option would be relevant where neither 'Accreditation may be denied' nor 'Terminal accreditation' would be applicable. It applies when RCVS considers that the deficiencies are sufficiently serious that the school should not receive accreditation. The veterinary school would be able to request a re-visit once it had addressed the deficiencies identified.

Options for decisions on accreditation of Veterinary Nursing qualifications (subject to annual quality monitoring) are as follows:

- a) **Full accreditation** for 5 years is given to qualifications that meet, or exceed, all of the accreditation standards.
- b) **Full accreditation for a shorter period** if significant deficiencies are identified in an existing programme: accreditation will be subject to the deficiencies being address within a specific period. The RCVS will normally undertake a full programme review before the end of the accreditation.
- c) **Provisional accreditation** new qualifications that have made substantial progress towards meeting the accreditation standards. Once the first cohort of students completes the qualification, a provisionally accredited University may apply to the RCVS for full accreditation. Students undertaking provisionally accredited qualifications will be required to pass the RCVS pre-registration examination. Provisional accreditation will not normally exceed five years.

- d) **Accreditation denied** where the RCVS considers that the deficiencies are so serious that they are unlikely to be rectifiable within a reasonable period of time.
- e) **Terminal accreditation** may apply if the University is unable to meet RCVS's standards, or if they voluntarily close. The procedures for terminal accreditation must be followed.

There are 5 options for both VS and VN decision-making, although in fact only two (Full accreditation and Full accreditation for a shorter period) have been used so far. During the last 5 years, only one university has got shorter – 3 years - accreditation of VS degrees. When we asked during the interview whether the representative of this institution understood why they got accreditation for 3 years and not for 2, 4, 5, 6 or 7 years, he claimed that initially it was not clear at all, especially as the oral feedback after the site visit was very positive. He admitted though that the process has been improved since then.

The RCVS claims that the consistency of decisions is achieved through the multi-layer committee structure: each stage of the accreditation process builds on the previous stage. Visitors on the site visit make a judgement based on their findings. For example, for VS accreditations, the Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee makes a recommendation on the accreditation status based on the visit report, and the Education Committee makes the decision on accreditation taking into consideration both findings from the visitors and recommendations from PQSC.

As stated by RCVS, all committees will look at accreditation decisions from previous visitations to ensure that procedures and standards are being applied consistently and fairly.

### **Analysis**

Although the criteria for decision-making exist and are published, in reality the complexity of options, especially the flexibility of defining “shorter period” accreditations, compromises the transparency and consistency of decisions. So far consistency of decisions is achieved through the multi-layer committee structure and due to the discursive and reflective approach of the committee members, but the decision-making is not based on an overarching policy and clear and transparent criteria. There is a number of different options for decisions that makes the system rather complicated. It may become especially a problem when accrediting overseas. The need for this complicated system is also questionable as in reality only two options out of five have been used so far.

### **Panel recommendations**

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.

**Panel conclusion: Partially compliant**

## ESG 2.6 REPORTING

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

### Evidence

The accreditation reports of VS accreditation are published on the RCVS website. The reports of international accreditations have not been published because it has not been the practice in the host country. Reports of VN accreditation visits will be published on the website from 2018.

Visitation reports follow the same structure for each institution visited and are presented in a consistent manner, although the layout of the reports produced for VS visitations is different from those generated by VN accreditation visits. Both reports include a summary of findings and comments, which analyse the information presented in the institution's self-evaluation report, and a list of actions or suggestions/recommendations that need to be fulfilled by the institution. Due to the differences between VS and VN standards, these are framed slightly differently under different headings.

As the visitation reports are usually long documents, containing a lot of information, an executive summary with the visitors' commendations, recommendations and suggestions is given at the beginning of each VS visitation report in order to make it helpful to all parties. With VN visitation reports, areas of good practice, areas for improvement and actions required are listed.

All visitation reports list the experts involved in visiting the institutions along with their qualifications. According to the SAR, reports are edited by RCVS staff (without changing the content of the report) to achieve a consistent RCVS house style.

For both VS and VN, the RCVS reporting process includes a stage of factual checking by the university. Once the report has been finalised by the visiting team, it is forwarded to the institution for a factual check, and once this has been completed and any factual changes have been made, the report is taken to RCVS committees for consideration (see also ESG 2.2 and 2.3 in this report).

The Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee will take into account the findings of the visitors, the commendations /suggestions /recommendations, and the completed rubric before deciding whether the report should stand as it is written, or that there should be changes or additions to the report. According to the SAR, the latter could only occur if the sub-committee felt that there were inconsistencies between the findings of the visitation and the "suggestions" or "recommendations" presented. If the sub-committee felt that the visitors had made a suggestion on a fairly serious issue, it could be upgraded to a recommendation and, conversely, if a recommendation had been made to address a very minor matter, it could be changed to a suggestion. This serves also the consistency of treatment across programmes/universities.

The recommendations in the report are basis for the action plan and to some extent also for the annual monitoring reports of the universities.

During the interviews with university representatives and stakeholders we learned that although the reports are not widely read (especially by employers), all interviewees knew where to find them. The representatives of universities confirmed that the quality of reports had increased significantly over the years and that they find the reports useful.

### **Analysis**

Based on SAR and studying the samples of VS and VN reports on RCVS's website and on site, the review panel came to the conclusion that the structure and content of accreditation reports reflect all elements described in ESG 2.6.

The reports include information about experts and their qualifications; evidence, analysis and findings; conclusions; features of good practice (commendations for VS, areas of good practice for VN); recommendations/suggestions (VS), and areas for improvement and actions required (VN).

The follow-up activities in the form of action plan after the accreditation, and to some extent also of annual monitoring reports, are based on the recommendations of the visiting team.

All reports contain an executive summary with commendations, recommendations and suggestions (VS) or areas of good practice, areas for improvement and actions (VN).

The reporting process includes a stage of factual checking by the university before the report is finalised.

**Panel conclusion: Fully compliant**

### **ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS**

Standard:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

### **Evidence**

Both, VS and VN accreditation processes, follow the same appeals procedure, described in the document "RCVS Visitation Appeal Procedure" (Annex 5 of SAR). This procedure has been introduced in 2017 as a result of the self-evaluation, in order to address the requirements of the ESG. As of SAR, up until 2017 any institution that wished to appeal an accreditation decision would have needed to make a case to the Privy Council. Whilst this meant that a mechanism existed, it constituted a very high hurdle, and, as such, might be seen as unfairly onerous. RCVS has, therefore, introduced an appeals procedure which it feels is proportionate, utilising members of the existing examinations appeals committee of the RCVS which comprises members of both professions and lay representatives.

According to the "RCVS Visitation Appeal Procedure", the Examination Appeals Committee will be appointed from time to time by or on behalf of the Council. It will include veterinary surgeons, registered veterinary nurses and lay persons. Two members of the committee will be designated by or on behalf of RCVS's Council as its chairman and vice-chairman.

The Examination Appeals Committee will act through panels when dealing with appeals. An appeals panel will consist of between three and five members of the Examination Appeals Committee chosen by the chairman of this committee and will include one person who is not a member of RCVS' Council.

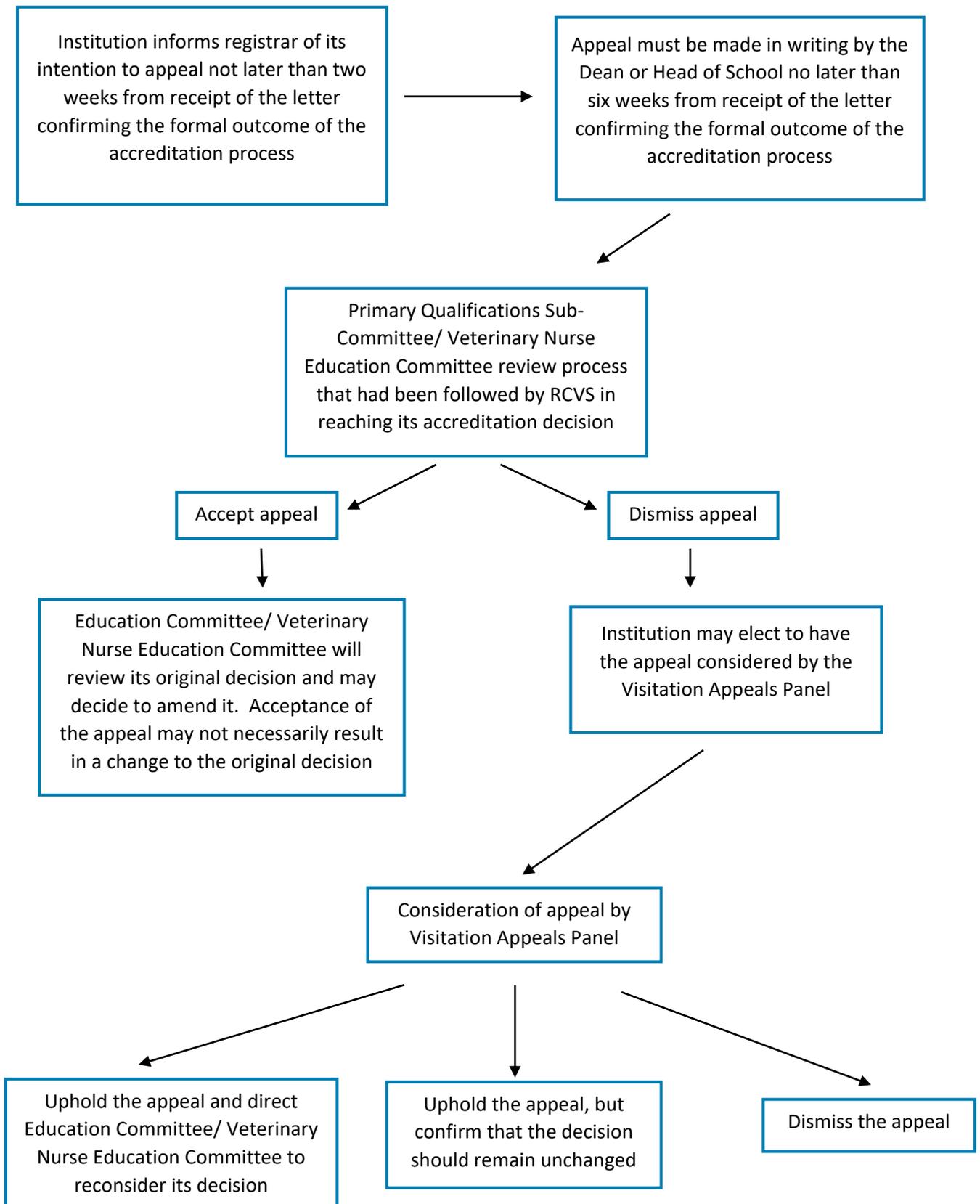
A school which is unhappy with the result of the process outlined above would still have recourse to the Privy Council, which now forms a final independent external appeal process.

A flowchart of the appeals process is given below.

Complaints can be received and dealt with at any stage of the process. They must be made in writing and will be dealt with in liaison with the Chairs of the relevant sub-committees or committees, whichever is appropriate depending on the nature of the complaint.

During the interview with the university representatives, they claimed and demonstrated that they were aware of the process and knew whom to address in case of dissatisfaction with the accreditation decision or process.

The review panel learned from the SAR and interviews that before a visitation takes place, the head of veterinary school or head of Veterinary Nursing centre being visited has the right to challenge the appointment of any member of the visiting team and ask RCVS to reconsider the appointment if they feel that any of the nominated visitors has a conflict of interest that cannot be managed during the visitation process.



## **Analysis**

In 2017, the RCVS simplified the appeal process, thus made it more accessible and applicable to universities. Before the universities needed to address all appeals to the Privy Council which was time and resource consuming. The process is described in the document “RCVS Visitation Appeal Procedure” and published on RCVS’s website. In addition, there is a clearly defined system for dealing with complaints.

The university representatives are aware of where to find information about the appeals and complaints process and whom to address in case of dissatisfaction with the accreditation process or decision.

As the procedure has been only recently developed and very few institutions have been accredited since then, no examples of appeals were available at the time of the ENQA review. However, the review panel saw enough evidence to conclude that the College has developed a solid basis to meet this standard.

**Panel conclusion: Fully compliant**

# CONCLUSION

## SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

### ESG 2.2

The RCVS is commended for its well-structured and systematic follow-up process that allows institutions to demonstrate their improvements based on experts' recommendations between accreditations.

## OVERVIEW OF JUDGEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### ESG 3.1 Substantially compliant

#### *Panel recommendations:*

- 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.

### ESG 3.2 Fully compliant

### ESG 3.3 Fully compliant

### ESG 3.4 Partially compliant

#### *Panel recommendations:*

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

### ESG 3.5 Fully compliant

### ESG 3.6 Substantially compliant

#### *Panel recommendation:*

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

### ESG 3.7 Fully compliant

### ESG 2.1 Substantially compliant

*Panel recommendation:* Develop VN accreditation methodology closer to the one of VS, and through this increase the focus on IQA in VN reviews, with especial attention to student-centred learning, also in VN reviews.

### ESG 2.2 Fully compliant

### ESG 2.3 Fully compliant

#### **ESG 2.4** Substantially compliant

##### *Panel recommendation:*

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

#### **ESG 2.5** Partially compliant

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.

#### **ESG 2.6** Fully compliant

#### **ESG 2.7** Fully compliant

In the light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the review panel is satisfied that, in the performance of its functions, RCVS is in compliance with the ESG.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

**ESG 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 documentation include 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.

**ESG 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.

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.

# ANNEXES

## ANNEX 1: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

10 APR 2018		
TIMING	TOPIC	PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW
	Review panel's kick-off meeting and preparations for the visit A pre-visit meeting with the agency contact person to clarify elements related to the overall system and context (if requested)	
16.00 – 17.00	Meeting with the CEO and Presidential Team (President and Vice-Presidents of RCVS Council)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lizzie Lockett (CEO)</li> <li>• Stephan May (RCVS President)</li> <li>• Amanda Boag (Junior Vice-President) (Skype)</li> <li>• Kit Sturgess (RCVS Treasurer)</li> </ul>
11 APR 2018		
8.30 – 9.00	Review panel's private meeting	
9.00 – 9.30	Meeting with the team responsible for preparation of the self-assessment report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lily Lipman (RVN Qualifications Manager)</li> <li>• Jordan Nicholls (Senior Education Officer)</li> <li>• Freda Andrews (Former RCVS Director of Education)</li> </ul>
9.30 – 9.45	Review panel's private discussion	
9.45 – 10.30	Meeting with representatives of RCVS Council (except President and Vice-Presidents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lynne Hill (RCVS Council)</li> <li>• Mandisa Greene (RCVS Council)</li> <li>• Andrea Jeffrey (RCVS Council)</li> <li>• David Argyle (RCVS Council)</li> </ul>
10.30 – 10.45	Review panel's private discussion	
10.45 – 11.45	Meeting with representatives of Senior Staff (especially Registrar, Director of HR, Director of Veterinary Nursing, Director of Education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eleanor Ferguson (RCVS Registrar)</li> <li>• Kim Cleland (RCVS Director of HR)</li> <li>• Julie Dugmore (RCVS Director of Veterinary Nursing)</li> <li>• Chris Warman (RCVS Director of Education)</li> <li>• Corrie McCann (RCVS Director of Finance)</li> </ul>
11.45 – 12.00	Review panel's private discussion	
12.00 – 13.00	Meeting with representatives of Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee and Education Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clare Tapsfield-Wright (Chair or PQSC)</li> <li>• Jo Oultram (PQSC)</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malcolm Cobb (PQSC)</li> <li>• Susan Dawson (Chair of Education Committee)</li> <li>• Susan Paterson (Education Committee)</li> </ul>
13.00 – 14.15	Lunch (panel only)	
14.15 – 15.00	Meeting with representatives of Veterinary Nurse Education Committee and Veterinary Nurses Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liz Cox (Chair of VNC)</li> <li>• Susan Howarth (VNEC)</li> <li>• Susan Proctor (VNC)</li> <li>• Hilary Orpet (VNC)</li> <li>• Liz Mossop (VNEC)</li> </ul>
15.00 – 15.15	Review panel's private discussion	
15.15 – 16.15	Meeting with representatives of Audit and Risk Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liz Butler (External Chair of Audit &amp; Risk Committee)</li> <li>• Victor Olowe (External member of ARC)</li> <li>• Janice Shardlow (External member of ARC)</li> </ul>
16.15 – 18.00	Wrap-up meeting among panel members and preparations for day 3	
<b>12 APR 2018</b>		
8.30 – 9.00	Review panel private meeting	
9.00 – 9.45	Meeting with heads of some reviewed HEIs/HEI representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suzanne Edwards (Harper Adams University)</li> <li>• Nicola Ruedisueli (Head of VN School, Nottingham Trent University)</li> <li>• Gary England (Dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science, University of Nottingham)</li> <li>• James Wood (Head of Department of Veterinary Medicine, University of Cambridge)</li> </ul>
9.45 – 10.00	Review panel's private discussion	
10.00 – 10.45	Meeting with representatives from the reviewers' pool: incl. academic, employer and student representatives (ideally some from outside UK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hannah Mason (VS Student representative)</li> <li>• Malcolm Bennett (RCVS VS Visitor)</li> <li>• Fred McKeating (RCVS VS Visitor)</li> <li>• Lauren Moore (VN Student representative)</li> <li>• Rachel Lumbis (RCVS VN Visitor)</li> </ul>
10.45 – 11.00	Review panel's private discussion	
11.00 – 12.00	Meeting with stakeholder representatives, incl. relevant governmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aroon Korgaonkar (DEFRA)</li> </ul>

	department, QAA, employers, students (AVS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• David Black (Paragon Veterinary Group – Employer)</li> <li>• Dave Charles (Association of Veterinary Students Senior Vice-President)</li> <li>• Maureen McLaughlin (QAA/PSRB Forum)</li> <li>• Racheal Marshall (Vets Now – Employer)</li> </ul>
12.00 – 13.00	Meeting among panel members to agree on final issues to clarify	
13.00 – 14.15	Lunch (panel only)	
14.15 – 14.45	Meeting with CEO to clarify any pending issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lizzie Lockett (CEO)</li> <li>• Stephan May (RCVS President)</li> </ul>
14.45 – 16.30	Private meeting among panel members to agree on the main findings	
16.30 – 17.00	Final de-briefing meeting with staff and Council/Board members of the agency to inform about preliminary findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lily Lipman (RVN Qualifications Manager)</li> <li>• Jordan Nicholls (Senior Education Officer)</li> <li>• Chris Warman (Director of Education)</li> <li>• Julie Dugmore (Director of Veterinary Nursing)</li> <li>• Lizzie Lockett (CEO)</li> <li>• Stephen May (RCVS President)</li> <li>• Liz Cox (Chair of VNC)</li> </ul>

## ANNEX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW

### External review of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

#### Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

October 2017

#### **1. Background and Context**

Setting and monitoring the standards for veterinary and veterinary nurse education is a key responsibility of the RCVS. The RCVS's authority and statutory obligation to accredit veterinary schools comes under the Primary national legislation, the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (item 1). The RCVS defines the competences that need to be met by the new graduate, and specifies the requirements for veterinary and veterinary nursing degree courses to be approved for registration purposes. For a veterinary degree or veterinary nursing degree to be approved for registration purposes by the College, the course must meet these published RCVS criteria.

The RCVS undertakes formal visitations to universities to ensure that veterinary and veterinary nursing degree standards are being maintained. For UK universities offering veterinary degrees, RCVS reports its recommendations to the Queen's Privy Council, which is a formal body of advisers to the Sovereign of the United Kingdom. For veterinary nursing degrees, RCVS reports its findings through the Veterinary Nurse Education Council and the Veterinary Nurse Council.

RCVS is applying for the first time for ENQA membership.

#### **2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation**

This review, will evaluate the way in which and to what extent RCVS fulfils the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether membership of RCVS should be granted.

The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards granting membership.

##### **2.1 Activities of RCVS within the scope of the ESG**

In order for RCVS to apply for ENQA membership and for registration in EQAR, this review will analyse all activities of RCVS that are within the scope of the ESG, i.e. reviews, audits, evaluations or accreditation of higher education institutions or programmes that relate to teaching and learning (and their relevant links to research and innovation). This is regardless of whether these activities are carried out within or outside the EHEA, and whether they are obligatory or voluntary.

The following activities of RCVS have to be addressed in the external review:

- Accreditation of veterinary degrees by RCVS
- Accreditation of veterinary nursing degrees by RCVS

### **3. The Review Process**

The process is designed in the light of the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and in line with the requirements of the *EQAR Procedures for Applications*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation of the Terms of Reference and protocol for the review;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- Self-assessment by RCVS including the preparation of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit by the review panel to RCVS;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the ENQA Review Committee;
- Analysis of the scrutiny by the ENQA Board and their decision regarding ENQA membership;
- Follow-up of the panel's and/or ENQA Board's recommendations by the agency, including a voluntary follow-up visit.

#### **3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members**

The review panel consists of four members: one or two quality assurance experts, an academic employed by a higher education institution, student member, and eventually a labour market representative (if requested). One of the members will serve as the chair of the review panel, and another member as a review secretary. Two of the reviewers are nominated by the ENQA Board on the basis of proposals submitted to ENQA by the member national agencies. The third external reviewer is drawn from a nomination provided by the European University Association (EUA) or the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE). The nomination of the student member comes from the European Students' Union (ESU).

In addition to the four members, the panel will be supported by the ENQA Secretariat review coordinator who will monitor the integrity of the process and ensure that ENQA expectations are met throughout the process. The ENQA staff member will not be the Secretary of the review and will not participate in the discussions during the site visit interviews.

Current members of the ENQA Board are not eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide RCVS with the list of suggested experts with their respective curriculum vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards RCVS review.

#### **3.2 Self-assessment by RCVS, including the preparation of a self-assessment report**

RCVS is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-assessment process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-assessment is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;

- The self-assessment report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation and is expected to contain, among others: a brief description of the national HE and QA system; background description of the current situation of the Agency; an analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a SWOT analysis; each criterion (ESG part II and III) addressed individually. All agency's QA activities (whether within their national jurisdiction or outside of it, and whether obligatory or voluntary) will be described and their compliance with the ESG analysed.
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which RCVS fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the ESG and thus the requirements of ENQA membership.
- The self-assessment report is submitted to the ENQA Secretariat who has 4 weeks to pre-scrutinise it before forwarding the report to the panel of experts. The purpose of the pre-scrutiny is to ensure that the self-assessment report is satisfactory for the consideration of the panel. The Secretariat will not judge the content of information itself but whether the necessary information, as stated in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, is present. For the second and subsequent reviews, the agency is expected to enlist the recommendations provided in the previous review and to outline actions taken to meet these recommendations. In case the self-assessment report does not contain the necessary information and fails to respect the requested form and content, the ENQA Secretariat reserves the right to reject the report and ask for a revised version within 4 weeks. In such cases, an additional fee of 1000 € will be charged to the agency.
- The report is submitted to the review panel a minimum of six weeks prior to the site visit.

### **3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel**

RCVS will draw up a draft proposal of the schedule for the site visit to be submitted to the review panel at least two months before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule includes an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit, the duration of which is 2,5 days. The approved schedule shall be given to RCVS at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by RCVS in arriving in London (United Kingdom)

The site visit will close with an oral presentation of the major issues of the evaluation by review panel.

### **3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report**

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under articles 2 and 2.1. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings with regards to each ESG. A draft will be first submitted to the ENQA review coordinator who will check the report for consistency, clarity and language and it will be then submitted to RCVS for comment on factual accuracy. If RCVS chooses to provide a statement in reference to the draft report it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter the review panel will take into account the statement by RCVS, finalise the document and submit it to ENQA.

The report is to be finalised within three months of the site visit and will not exceed 40 pages in length.

When preparing the report, the review panel should also bear in mind the *EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG*, so as to ensure that the report will contain sufficient information for the Register Committee for application to EQAR.

RCVS is also requested to provide a letter addressed to the ENQA Board outlining its motivation applying for membership and the ways in which RCVS expects to contribute to the work and objectives of ENQA during its membership. This letter will be discussed along with the final evaluation report.

#### **4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report**

RCVS will consider the expert panel's report and will publish it on its website once the ENQA Board has made its decision. The report will also be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the ENQA Board. RCVS commits to preparing a follow-up plan in which it addresses the recommendations of the review panel and to submitting a follow-up report to the ENQA Board. The follow-up report will be published on the ENQA website, in addition to the full review report and the Board's decision.

The follow-up report will be complemented by a small-scale visit to the agency performed by two members of the original panel (whenever possible). This visit will be used to discuss issues, based on the ESG, considered as of particular importance or challenge by RCVS. Its purpose is entirely developmental and has no impact on the judgement of membership and/or compliance of the agency with the ESG. Should the agency not wish to take advantage of this opportunity, it may opt out by informing the ENQA Review Coordinator about this.

#### **5. Use of the report**

ENQA shall retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the expert panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, shall be vested in ENQA.

The review report is used by the Board of ENQA for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether RCVS has met the ESG and can be thus admitted as a member of ENQA. The report will also be used for registration on EQAR, and is designed so as to serve these two purposes. However, the review report is to be considered final only after being approved by the ENQA Board. Once submitted to RCVS and ENQA and until it is approved by the Board the report may not be used or relied upon by RCVS, the panel and any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. RCVS may use the report at its discretion only after the Board has approved of the report. The approval of the report is independent of the decision on membership.

The Chair of the panel shall remain available to respond to questions of clarification or further information from the EQAR Register Committee provided that the ENQA Secretariat is copied in all such requests.

## 6. Budget

RCVS shall pay the following review related fees:

Fee of the Chair	4,500 EUR
Fee of the Secretary	4,500 EUR
Fee of the 2 other panel members	4,000 EUR (2,000 EUR each)
Fee of 2 panel members for follow-up visit	1,000 EUR (500 EUR each)
Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat	7,000 EUR
Experts Training fund	1,400 EUR
Approximate travel and subsistence expenses	6,000 EUR
Travel and subsistence expenses follow-up visit	1,600 EUR

This gives a total indicative cost of 30,000.00 EUR VAT excl. for a review team of 4 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, RCVS will cover any additional costs after the completion of the review. However, the ENQA Secretariat will endeavour to keep the travel and subsistence expenses in the limits of the planned budget, and will refund the difference to RCVS if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget. The review fee will be paid by RCVS in three instalments – first one at the signature of the contract and the next two before the site visit.

The fee of the follow-up visit is included in the overall cost of the review and will not be reimbursed in case the agency does not wish to benefit from it.

In the event of a second site visit required by the Board and aiming at completing the assessment of compliance, and should the agency accept a second visit, an additional fee of 500 EUR per expert, as well as travel and subsistence costs are recoverable from the agency.

## 7. Indicative Schedule of the Review

Agreement on terms of reference	August 2017
Appointment of review panel members	August 2017
Self-assessment completed	By end December 2017
Pre-screening of SER by ENQA coordinator	January 2018
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	February 2018
Briefing of review panel members	March 2018
Review panel site visit	10-12 April 2018
Drafting of evaluation report and submitting it to ENQA coordinator for pre-screening	Early June 2018
Draft of evaluation report to RCVS	End June 2018
Statement of RCVS to review panel if necessary	Mid-July 2018
Submission of final report to ENQA	End July 2018
Consideration of the report by ENQA Board and response of RCVS	September 2018 (depending on the date of ENQA Board's meeting)
Publication of the report	October 2018 (depending on the date of ENQA Board's meeting and subject to report being approved)

## ANNEX 3: GLOSSARY

ACOVENE	Accreditation Committee for Veterinary Nurse Education
ARC	Audit and Risk Committee
AVBC	Australasian Veterinary Boards Council
AVMA	American Veterinary Medical Association
AVS	Association of Veterinary Students
EAEVE	European Association of Establishments of Veterinary Education
EC	Education Committee
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015
HE	higher education
HEI	higher education institution
HR	human resource
IAWG	International Accreditors Working Group
IQA	internal quality assurance
PQSC	Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee
QA	quality assurance
QAA	UK's Quality Assurance Agency
RCVS	Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
SAR	self-assessment report
SAVC	South African Veterinary Council
SDB	Strategic Development Budget
USDE	United States Department of Education
VN	veterinary nurses
VNC	Veterinary Nurses Council
VNEC	Veterinary Nurse Education Committee
VS	veterinary surgeons
VSA	Veterinary Surgeons Act
VSC	Veterinary Schools Council

## ANNEX 4. DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW

### DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY RCVS IN SAR AND ON SITE

Document	Chapter reference
QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education	Chapter 3
Subject Benchmark Statement Veterinary Science	Chapter 3
Subject Benchmark Statement Veterinary Nursing	Chapter 3
RCVS Day One Competences	Chapter 3
Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966	Chapter 4
Royal Charter of the RCVS	Chapter 4
Supplementary Royal Charter 2015	Chapter 4
Code of Professional Conduct – Veterinary Surgeons	Chapter 4
Code of Professional Conduct – Veterinary Nurses	Chapter 4
VN registration rules	Chapter 4
VN conduct and discipline rules	Chapter 4
AVMA recognition agreement	Chapter 8
SAVC recognition agreement	Chapter 8
AVBC recognition agreement	Chapter 8
IAWG agenda and minutes 2014 & 2016	Chapter 8
RCVS Strategic Plan	Chapter 9.1 ESG 3.1
RCVS standards and procedures for the accreditation of veterinary degrees	Chapter 9.1 ESG 3.1
RCVS awarding organisation and higher education institution handbook	Chapter 9.1 ESG 3.1
Vet Futures	Chapter 9.1 ESG 3.1
Vet Nurse Futures	Chapter 9.1 ESG 3.1
RCVS Facts 2015 & 2016	Chapter 9.4 ESG 3.4
RCVS Annual Report 2015 & 2016	Chapter 9.5 ESG 3.5
Visitor application person specification – Veterinary surgeon	Chapter 9.5 ESG 3.5
Visitor application person specification – Veterinary nurse	Chapter 9.5 ESG 3.5
RCVS Culture – The Way We Work	Chapter 9.6 ESG 3.6
SGU visit feedback 2016	Chapter 9.6 ESG 3.6
Surrey visit feedback 2017	Chapter 9.6 ESG 3.6
Surrey visit feedback 2018	Chapter 9.6 ESG 3.6
Cambridge visit feedback 2018	Chapter 9.6 ESG 3.6
US Department of Education review – report and outcome	Chapter 9.7 ESG 3.7
Veterinary Surgeon visitor training day presentation	Chapter 10.4 ESG 2.4
Veterinary Nurse visitor training day presentation	Chapter 10.4 ESG 2.4
Glasgow visit report 2013	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Bristol visit report 2014	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Cambridge visit report 2015	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Edinburgh visit report 2015	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Liverpool visit report 2016	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
SGU visit report 2016	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Surrey visit report 2017	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Anglia Ruskin visit report 2012	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
London visit report 2012	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Portsmouth visit report 2013	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
UWE visit report 2013	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Royal Agricultural University visit report 2013	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Brighton visit report 2015	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6

USWCG visit report 2015	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
University of Wales visit report 2015	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Nottingham Trent visit report 2015	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
UWE visit report 2016	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Harper Adams visit report 2016	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Bristol visit report 2017	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Coventry visit report 2017	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Oxford Brookes visit report 2017	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
Plymouth visit report 2017	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
UCLan visit report 2017	Chapter 10.6 ESG 2.6
EMS survey result 2014 & 2016	Chapter 11
Day One Competences Working Party minutes and survey results	Chapter 11
RCVS Council Minutes 2017-2018	Minutes
Audit & Risk Committee minutes 2017-2018	Minutes
Veterinary Nurses Council minutes 2013-2018	Minutes
Veterinary Nursing Education Committee minutes 2013-2018	Minutes
Education Committee minutes 2013-2018	Minutes
Primary Qualifications Sub-Committee minutes 2013-2018	Minutes
Terms of Reference for RCVS committees	Minutes
RCVS accreditation decisions 2013-2018	Minutes
RCVS News 2016 – 2017	Publications
VN Education news 2016 – 2017	Publications
Fitness to Practise guide for student VNs	Publications
RCVS Guide for Recent Graduates	Publications
PDP Guidance	Publications
Veterinary Surgeon & Veterinary Nurse careers leaflet	Publications
Mind Matters Guide	Publications
RCVS Visitation Appeal Procedure	ESG 2.7



**THIS REPORT** presents findings of the ENQA Agency Review of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), undertaken in 2018.

---



**2018 ENQA AGENCY REVIEW**