

Council Meeting

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 13 March 2025 at 10:00 am in the Rosalind Paget Room at the Royal College of Nursing, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN

Agenda	Classification ¹	Rationale ²
1. President's introduction	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
2. Apologies for absence	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
3. Declaration of interests	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
4. Minutes of meeting held on 16 January 2025		
i. Unclassified minutes	Unclassified	n/a
ii. Classified appendix	Confidential	1, 2, 3 4
5. Matters arising		
a. Obituaries	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
b. Council correspondence	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
c. CEO update	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
6. Matters for decision by Council and for report (unclassified items)		
a. RCVS governance reform	Unclassified	n/a
b. Review of Public Advisory Group	Unclassified	n/a
c. Council culture	Unclassified	n/a
d. RCVS Strategic plan 2025 – 2029	Unclassified	n/a

<p>7. Reports of standing committees – to note</p> <p><u>Please note:</u> all unclassified minutes from standing committee meetings will be found as part of the <i>following</i> meeting's papers for the respective committees, see: https://www.rcvs.org.uk/who-we-are/committees/ and navigate to the specific committee from there.</p>		
a. Advancement of the Professions Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
b. Audit and Risk Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
c. Education Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
d. Finance and Resources Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
e. Registration Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
f. Standards Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
g. Veterinary Nurses Council	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
h. PIC/DC Liaison Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
<p>8. Reports of statutory committees – to note</p>		
a. Preliminary Investigation Committee	Unclassified	n/a
b. RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee	Unclassified	n/a
c. Disciplinary Committee and RVN Disciplinary Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
<p>9. Notices of motion</p>	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
<p>10. Questions</p>	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
<p>11. Recommendation for the appointment of Officers – President and Vice-President (Senior) respectively for confirmation at the AGM on 4 July 2025</p>	Oral report Unclassified	n/a

12. Election of Junior Vice-President – recommendation for confirmation at the AGM on 4 July 2025	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
13. Election of Treasurer – recommendation for confirmation at the AGM on 4 July 2025	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
14. Other elections		
a. Chair, Advancement of the Professions Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
b. Chair, Education Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
c. Chair, Standards Committee	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
15. Any other College business (unclassified)	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
16. Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified)	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
17. Date of next meeting Thursday, 5 June 2025 at 10:00 am (reconvening in the afternoon)	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
18. Matters for decision by Council and for report (confidential items)		
a. Update on major projects	Oral report Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4
b. CMA update	Oral report Confidential	1, 3, 4
c. RCVS Website project update	Confidential	1, 2, 3
d. Statutory Membership Examination Appeals procedures	Confidential	1
e. Legislative change	Confidential	1
f. Standard Indemnity	Confidential	1, 2, 3

g. Audit and Risk Committee recruitment – update	Oral report Private	1, 5
h. RCVS Honours and Awards 2025	Private	1, 5
19. Any other College business (confidential items)		
a. Comments on classified appendices	Oral report Confidential	# TBC
b. Other business	Oral report Confidential	# TBC
20. Risk Register, equality and diversity (confidential items)		
	Oral report Confidential	# TBC
Dawn Wiggins Secretary, RCVS Council 020 7202 0737 / d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk		

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Terms of Reference

The vision of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons [as agreed in the current strategic plan]

1. Our vision is to be recognised as a trusted, compassionate and proactive regulator, and a supportive and ambitious Royal College, underpinning confident veterinary professionals of whom the UK can be proud.

Role of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons [derived from the Charter]

2. The objects of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, as laid down in the Supplemental Charter granted on 17 February 2015 to the Royal Charter of 1844, ie:
 - a. To set, uphold and advance veterinary standards, and to promote, encourage and advance the study and practice of the art and science of veterinary surgery and medicine, in the interests of the health and welfare of animals and in the wider public interest.
 - b. The Charter also recognises those functions provided for in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, in terms of the regulation of the profession, and also recognises other activities not conferred upon the College by the Veterinary Surgeons Act or any other Act, which may be carried out in order to meet its objects, including but not limited to:
 - i. Accrediting veterinary education, training and qualifications, other than as provided for in the Act in relation to veterinary surgeons;
 - ii. Working with others to develop, update and ensure co-ordination of international standards of veterinary education;
 - iii. Administering examinations for the purpose of registration, awarding qualifications and recognising expertise other than as provided for in the Act;
 - iv. Promulgating guidance on post-registration veterinary education and training for those admitted as members and associates of the College;
 - v. Encouraging the continued development and evaluation of new knowledge and skills;
 - vi. Awarding fellowships, honorary fellowships, honorary associateships or other designations to suitable individuals;
 - vii. Keeping lists or registers of veterinary nurses and other classes of associate;
 - viii. Promulgating guidance on professional conduct;

- ix. Setting standards for and accrediting veterinary practices and other suppliers of veterinary services;
- x. Facilitating the resolution of disputes between registered persons and their clients;
- xi. Providing information services and information about the historical development of the veterinary professions;
- xii. Monitoring developments in the veterinary professions and in the provision of veterinary services;
- xiii. Providing information about, and promoting fair access to, careers in the veterinary professions.

The purpose of RCVS Council [derived from the Charter]

3. It is laid down in the Charter that the affairs of the College shall be managed by the Council as constituted under the Act. The Council shall have the entire management of and superintendence over the affairs, concerns and property of the College (save those powers of directing removal from, suspension from or restoration to the register of veterinary surgeons and supplementary veterinary register reserved to the disciplinary committee established under the Act) and shall have power to act by committees, subcommittees or boards and to delegate such functions as it thinks fit from time to time to such committees, subcommittees or boards and to any of its own number and to the employees and agents of the College.
4. The Council is also responsible for the appointment of the CEO and Registrar, and the ratification of the Assistant Registrars. Appointment of all other staff members is the responsibility of the CEO and relevant members of the Senior Team.
5. A strategic plan is developed and agreed by Council to facilitate the delivery of these activities and to ensure ongoing development and quality improvement.
6. A delegation scheme that outlines how Council's functions are managed via system of committees and other groups is agreed annually by Council.

How Council members work

7. In order to enable the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons to fulfil its vision, and to discharge its functions under its Royal Charter and the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, RCVS Council members will:
 - a. Abide by the Nolan Principles of Public Life;
 - b. Work in the best interests of the public, and of animal health and welfare and public health;
 - c. Respectfully listen to the voices of the professions, the public and other stakeholders, and reflect them in discussions where appropriate, ensuring they are put into context;
 - d. Neither be answerable to, nor represent, any group of individuals;
 - e. Support the College's vision and work towards the success of the College and its functions;
 - f. Live the College's values;
 - g. Act at all times in a constructive, supportive and compassionate manner;
 - h. Exercise a duty of care to the staff employed by the College, working through the CEO and Registrar;

- i. Recognise the importance of a collegiate atmosphere where robust discussion is welcomed in the formation of policy and multiple points of view are listened to and respected;
- j. Respect and support the decisions made by Council when communicating externally;
- k. Communicate College activities and positions to relevant stakeholders;
- l. Abide by the Code of Conduct for Council and Committee members.

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	16 January 2025
Title	Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2025
Summary	Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2025
Decisions required	To approve the unclassified minutes and classified appendix.
Attachments	Classified appendix (confidential)
Author	Dawn Wiggins Secretary, Council 020 7202 0737 / d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Classified appendix	Confidential	1, 2, 3, 4

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Council

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Thursday, 16 January 2025 by Zoom

Members:

Miss L S Belton (in the Chair)

Dr L H Allum

Mrs B S Andrews-Jones

Professor D C Barrett

Dr S E Bennett

Mr D Bray

Dr A L Calow

*^Mr J M Castle

*Dr D S Chambers

Mrs O D R Cook

Ms L Ford

Dr M M S Gardiner

Mrs S D Howarth

Mr T M Hutchinson

Professor M D Jones

Dr Z J Kennedy

*Professor C M Loughrey

Mrs C-L McLaughlan

*Dr A J McLeish

Professor T D H Parkin

Dr S Paterson

*Mr T J Walker

Mr W A S Wilkinson

Ms J S M Worthington

*Denotes absent

*^ Denotes absent from 2:00 pm

In attendance:

Mr L Bishop

Ms L Hall

Mr I A Holloway

Ms L Lockett

Ms C McCann

Mr B Myring

Dr L Prescott-Clements

Ms J Stetzel

Mr S Wiklund

Media & Publications Manager

People Director

Director of Communications (DoComms)

CEO

Director of Operations (DoOps)

Head of Policy, Insight and Public Affairs (HoPIPA)

Director of Education (DoEd)

Head of Marketing & Digital Communications (HoMDC)

Assistant Registrar – Education & Registration (AsstReg)

Guests:

Ms L Chappell

Dr N T Connell

Dr V J Cyphus

Mr A Davies

Dr W Dohne

Ms A Finton

Dr D Greenberg

Mr J Loeb

Miss S S Mane

Media First (open session and AI 17 only)

FRCVS, Chair Fellowship Board (open session only)

MRCVS (open session only)

Krow Group (AI 14f only)

MRCVS (open session only)

British Veterinary Association (BVA) (open session only)

MRCVS (open session only)

Veterinary Record (open session only)

Veterinary student (open session only)

Dr R Manzoor	Veterinary student (open session only)
Ms J Marchant	Krow Group (AI 14f only)
Ms L Mullineaux	President, BVA (open session only)
Mrs B Ondes Candan	MRCVS (open session only)
Ms J Shardlow	Chair, Audit and Risk Committee
Mr J B Sutton	MRCVS (open session only)
Mr A Webb	<i>Veterinary Times</i> (open session only)
Mr D Wingham	Media First (open session and AI 17 only)

President's introduction

1. The President welcomed guests and outlined the order of the meeting.

Apologies for absence

2. Apologies for absence had been received from:

- Mr Castle (from 2:00 pm)
- Dr D S Chambers
- Professor Loughrey
- Dr McLeish
- Mr Walker

- Dr C H Middlemiss (Observer)

Declarations of interest

3. There were no declarations of interest to report.

Minutes

4. Council had had the opportunity to comment electronically on the unclassified minutes and classified appendix of the meeting held on 7 November 2024 and remote decisions made 17-19 November 2024 and 5-9 December 2024, and they were before Council for approval.
5. There were no comments or questions, and the minutes were accepted as a true record by a unanimous verbal vote.

Matters arising

Obituaries

6. The College had been saddened to learn of the recent passing of Dr Simon Doherty, a Past President of the BVA 2018-19 and World Vet of the Year 2024. A copy of the College's own press release had been included in the meeting papers. Council and guests stood for a minute silence for all members of the professions who had passed since the last meeting.

Council correspondence

7. The President reported the following matters:

RCVS Council Election 2025

8. Council was reminded that, subject to eligibility, the deadline for submission of nominations to stand for RCVS Council was 5:00 pm on Friday, 31 January 2025. Council members were not permitted to nominate anyone for standing for Council and Registered Addresses must be used for the Nomination Form.
9. It was noted that the 2025 election would be the first year with the new Election Scheme. The nominations pack had been updated per the recommendations from the Council Culture Working Group and subsequent Council agreement, and thanks were given to the Communications Team for producing it. The pack outlined the requisite information to be included in order to stand for nomination; registered addresses were still required in order to check a candidate's membership, but they would not be detailed on the ballot paper that goes out to the profession.

Elections for: Vice-President (Junior), Treasurer, Chairs of Advancement of the Professions, Education, and Standards, Committees for the College year July 2025 – July 2026

10. Council was reminded that any current member of Council could apply for the above roles. The deadline for submissions was 5:00 pm on Tuesday, 11 February 2025 and the (internal) elections would be agenda items at the forthcoming Council meeting in March. The Job Specifications for the roles were included in the meeting papers at agenda item 06c.

King's New Year Honours 2025

11. The following member had received an Honour in the King's New Year Honours List:

- Dr Amanda Jean Carson MRCVS MBE

12. The President had written to congratulate them.

CEO update

13. The CEO introduced the update, noting that the year ahead was expected to be one of change. She highlighted the following:

- work continued with Defra and other stakeholders on the argument for new legislation;
- following Council's approval in December, the new Registrar was expected to commence in post at the end of March 2025. The College had been waiting for the incoming person to

update all of their work contacts before going out publicly to the profession; a press release would be sent out the following week;

- at the Fellowship Day held in November, Professor Wood had been welcomed as Vice-Chair of Fellowship Board. During the day, there had been some really interesting discussions on disease preparedness; resilience for disasters and emergencies; and re-wilding;
- successful candidates of the Statutory Membership Examination had attended a ceremony in Manchester to welcome them to the profession; there had been 37 people who had achieved their membership from 19 different countries. Linked to that was the confirmation of the new Statutory Instrument that made the examination more accessible, which came into force in the New Year. Thanks were given to the Director of Education, ex-Registrar, Assistant Registrar (Education & Registration), and Defra colleagues for their work on the new legislation;
- Nottingham Veterinary School had had its first graduation of its second cohort of students (being the only veterinary school that had a second annual intake), the event had had a lovely warm atmosphere and the School was to be congratulated on taking this first cohort to graduation;
- a letter had been sent to remind employers to support their veterinary professionals with a working environment that allowed them to demonstrate their professional autonomy – that was in support of consumer choice in relation to some of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) issues and also something that Standards Committee felt strongly should be reiterated;
- the latest Surveys of the Professions had been published towards the end of 2024; the Surveys were undertaken every four to five years and it had been approximately 30 years since the first veterinary surgeons survey;
- the College's workforce model had also been published, in which data had been considered and assumptions made in order to forecast what future demand and supply of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses would be like in the year 2035. The model assumed that things would largely remain the same in terms of demand for veterinary services, and retention rates within the profession, but it took account of the new veterinary schools. It showed that although the gap between supply and demand would narrow, there would still be some shortages, for example, in public health. On the veterinary nursing side, there was a possible over-supply by 2035 but that had the potential to be rectified in the intervening period because VNs were not necessarily being used to the top of their abilities and there were opportunities for them to do much more;
- the Mind Matters Initiative Mental Health Research Symposium was set to take place in autumn 2025 and a call for abstracts had been sent out;
- the veterinary nursing annual renewal period was now complete;

- the Cambridge Veterinary School Improvement Report had been published following their conditional accreditation. It had been a difficult process and was a sensitive situation; the College wanted to support the students and make sure the timing of decisions took into account the recruitment cycle. The College team had been in touch with Cambridge to make sure that the College could support it to succeed as much as possible over the next nine months;
- the review of the Under Care and Out of Hours (UCOOH) changes made in 2023/early 2024 was ongoing following the first year post-implementation; data was being gathered and then would be assessed and reported back through Standards Committee to Council;
- committees, subcommittees, working parties and project boards continued to be busy, with consideration given to spending members' money in the right way; making sure the public interest and animal health and welfare drove all that the College did, and making sure that veterinary services were being delivered in a way that met the needs of all of the huge variety of users.

14. There were no comments or questions, and the update was noted.

Matters for decision by Council and for report (unclassified items)

Discretionary Fund

15. The President reported that, following the meeting, the applications to the Fund would subsequently be reported through the open session of Finance and Resources Committee, and would be reported to Council via its minutes.
16. The DoOps reported that the Discretionary Fund was a provision in the annual budget of £150,000 that could be used for projects that could not be budgeted for when it was put together, and to expedite activities during the year that were identified in the period. There were processes in place to ensure the expenditure was in accordance with the College's financial controls and, where relevant, followed the Project Protocol.
17. At the end of 2024, it was noted that there was an unspent / unapproved amount of just £1,213, which showed how important the budget was. The only application since the last report to Council was for £22,105 including Value Added Tax (VAT) for IT hardware for a room booking system for the new building – it had been an opportune time to include it.
18. There were no comments or questions, and the update was noted.

Eligibility of veterinary graduates from EAEVE-approved / -accredited schools for RCVS registration

19. The Chair, Education Committee (EC), reported that good progress was being made around the agreed approach for a longer-term solution to the temporary policy that was scheduled to end in January 2029.

20. A number of veterinary schools that the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) were due to visit over the course of the next year had been identified, and offered direct RCVS accreditation via a joint visitation with EAEVE. Of those schools, two had originally indicated their interest; one had recently undergone senior management changes and would now review the situation before committing; the other, in Barcelona, was keen to go ahead. That would be a good test case for 2025.
21. A format had been agreed with EAEVE of how those visits were going to work specifically in relation to RCVS presence on panels and the ability to ask questions or collect evidence directly related to RCVS standards. Council was reassured that the approach remained aligned with the UK accreditation process including the need to come to an independent decision about RCVS accreditation of the school(s).
22. The College was currently awaiting the list of visits for 2026 and would approach the respective schools to enquire about RCVS accreditation.

[Afternote: the lists were online, and the Education Committee / Team would consider them shortly with the view to invite schools for 2026.]

23. Comments and questions included, but were not limited to:

- having sat on numerous EAEVE accreditation panels, it was known how frantic the days of the visitation were – members met on the Monday evening; visited the school on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday; by Thursday night the report had to be written in order to report back on Friday morning. The paperwork stated that the RCVS member(s) with support on the ground would be able to consult in the background with a wider panel of RCVS accreditors; the concern was that even with support on the ground, as an EAEVE visitor it often meant working into the early hours of the morning and on the Thursday it was virtually all night – to additionally consider the RCVS accreditation differences in those meetings would be really tough on the individuals concerned and might not even be possible;
- o there had been specific discussions around the different lengths and processes; EAEVE send a lot of questions three weeks prior to the visit and there was a sense that they commenced the visit already with a report semi-written, so their visit was much shorter. It would be key to have experienced senior RCVS accreditation visitors on the first visit.

Now that the first visit had been confirmed, the College would work closely with EAEVE and aimed to have the team in the background to support the visitor(s). The proposal was that we were allowed up to two observers, one of whom would be a very experienced RCVS visitor, the other a staff member to pull the evidence together, the rubric, and undertake a lot of the writing;

- [I] was 100% confident that the RCVS accreditation process was thorough and robust, it was whether we were going to be able to do the same degree of thoroughness when looking at the European school. It was recognised that it was a compromise; what reassurances had

there been from EAEVE in writing as to how it would work and how long was the agreement in place for?

- there was a formal agreement in writing that had been agreed by EAEVE's Executive Committee; there was no formal end date, and it applied to other international regulators as well – the Australian Veterinary Board Council also had permission from EAEVE;
- a lot of the vet schools the College would wish to target were accredited to 2030, was there a 'game plan' of how to approach that?
 - that would be discussed at Education Committee both for the schools to be approached, and for the potential number of vets coming to the UK from those schools.

24. The update was noted.

Council culture

25. The People Director introduced the paper. Council was reminded that the Council Culture Working Group (CCWG) had been tasked to review the ways of working within Council to ensure its effective performance. Some of the tasks included the review of the Code of Conduct for Council (and committee) members, the Policy for handling complaints against Council (and committee) members, and the introduction of a performance and reflection conversation for the group as a whole and on an individual basis. At the time, Council had also completed a survey – results were annexed to the paper – and, where scores were low, action had been taken to address those areas. It had been agreed to revisit the survey to assess progress and check that the Code and Policy relating to Council members remained fit for purpose. The job descriptions of key roles within Council annexed to the paper had been written to help assess and understand the performance and key skills required.

26. Comments and questions included, but were not limited to:

- what happened when a person complained about Council / the route to complain, because the Privy Council website clearly stated it did not deal with complaints about other bodies – even when they were chartered – did the College hold a separate provision with the Privy Council?
 - it was confirmed that when such a complaint had arisen in the past, the College had approached Defra, who in turn said it needed to go to the Privy Council; that would, however, be checked;
- it was agreed that would be helpful so the Privy Council was 'on notice' and there was a process to deal with it should it arise, and it would avoid unnecessary frustration if a complainant came to the College about inconsistencies of publicly available information;
- was there a 'free-text' box on the survey for any additional comments?

- no, there had not been. When the survey was re-run, it could have the same questions in order to obtain a like-for-like comparison, and include the addition of a free-text box at the end to use for identifying any gaps, or unexpected matters, etc.;
- it was uncertain whether the detail of skills and personal behaviour and characteristics had been sufficiently captured in the attached job descriptions; a very important element was how new Council members were developed. Some people did not have much experience in chairing a meeting and might not have the confidence to put themselves forward – could there be something added about being committed to personal development opportunities, particularly in relation to the role of Committee Chair?
 - noted. Self-awareness, and self-development was key to culture;
- some organisations engaged external sources to look at culture, the conduct in board meetings, etc., and provided feedback that had been really helpful in highlighting areas that might not have been noticed, particularly when people were from different backgrounds; was that something the College could do?
 - that would entail significant cost and there was the risk if a group knew it was being audited that the behaviour may not be 'normal', but it could be investigated;
- job descriptions were accurate but might be perceived as daunting, particularly if you approached it as a Council member wanting to be more involved in the College's work who then saw the long list of criteria to fulfil. What sort of support or mentorship and training could be put into place to provide members with the confidence to acquire the skill sets to put themselves forward at a future date, so that it was possible to have a really diverse representation on the leadership team and as committee chairs?
 - the reflection conversations provided the opportunity to gather information about those who might be interested in future opportunities, to specifically identify missing skill sets for learning and development; there might also be merit in looking specifically at the skills of those who had expressed an interest in Officer Team positions, rather than something generic – the reflection conversations would provide a steer in the first instance.

Thought should also be given to the 'stepping stones' to becoming an Officer, such as chairing smaller groups such as working parties or subcommittees, to go on a leadership 'journey'. For the Presidential role or other Officer Team role, it would not be appropriate from a staff perspective to provide mentorship or leadership training because the roles required a person to 'hit the ground running' in a short space of time, lest the role itself became ineffective. Mentorship within Council offers 'buddying' in the first year on Council and members should be encouraged to talk to the people already in the various roles for their thoughts;
- it had been interesting to read the job description for the role of BVA President recently, that included clarity around the hours expected, flexibility, and pay structure. The College had created a job role as opposed to a job advert; if the College was genuinely planning

succession for certain positions within Council, they were not physically compatible alongside other jobs because of the number of hours required and in terms of someone that had a young family; it would be beneficial to have the information readily available so members could plan, for example, for three years' time, how they could get to the point where the hours and financial issues could be accommodated;

- a clear understanding of the hours involved would be useful; it would also be useful for extra hours for Vice-Chair positions – was that eligible for loss of earnings as well?
 - o there were a lot of ad hoc matters that were difficult to put a specific time on; there were also some difficulties with getting a rigid structure, but that did not mean improvements could not be made.

27. The discussion was drawn to a close.

28. Council was asked to confirm that the Code of Conduct for Council (and committee) members attached at Annex B to the paper, and the Policy for dealing with complaints against Council (and committee) members attached at Annex C to the paper, remained fit for purpose. A vote was taken:

For:	18
Against:	0
Abstain:	2

29. Mr Castle submitted an email vote which was included in the figures.

30. The Code of Conduct for Council (and committee) members, and Policy for handling complaints against Council (and committee) members were confirmed as fit for purpose by a majority electronic vote.

Reports of standing committees – to note

31. The President noted that most committees had not met since the last meeting of Council.

Advancement of the Professions Committee

32. There were no comments or questions raised.

Audit and Risk Committee

33. There were no comments or questions raised.

Education Committee

34. There were no comments or questions raised.

Finance and Resources Committee

35. There were no comments or questions raised.

Registration Committee

36. There were no comments or questions raised.

Standards Committee

37. The President informed Council that the Committee had been undertaking a guidance review and, in particular, had considered how the College communicated changes to the profession for clarity and so they were not so 'ad hoc'. A more structured approach was proposed to guidance, review changes and releases.

38. Also, the Head of Legal Services – Standards had put into place regular monthly meetings with Defra and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), in addition to all other communications, to try to strengthen and improve the communication between all parties.

39. The update was noted.

Veterinary Nurses Council

40. There were no comments or questions raised.

PIC / DC Liaison Committee

41. The President commented that the Committee had indicated that it would be advantageous to include some absolute numbers as well as percentages for clarity, as percentages alone could be misleading when numbers were low.

42. The update was noted.

Reports of statutory committees – to note

Preliminary Investigation Committee

43. Comments and questions included, but were not limited to:

- Council was asked to note that the number of cases commencing in June was markedly lower than in other months and that had had an impact on the percentage that met the Key Performance Indicator (KPI), did the lower number of cases mean that the KPI was missed by a greater amount?
 - o a lower number of cases when looking at the six-month figures meant a greater percentage missed. Proportionately, if there was a larger number of cases received with the same percentage of cases missing the KPI, then the percentage would have been lower, that was where the suggestion from PIC DC Liaison Committee (PIC DC LC) had arisen, to include absolute numbers to help with the clarity when discussing figures;
- whilst there had been fewer cases, there could be an assumption that there would be a lower workload, which could reduce the processing times and thus be better at meeting the KPI; or a higher proportion of complex cases that did not meet the KPI;

- the cases were variable, and that one case did not simply mean one issue; just because it started in a particular month, a case could be impacted by the complexity in the preceding month; the work undertaken was not isolated per month. Response times from other, external forces also had an additional impact. The College robustly interrogated itself where KPIs had been missed and realistically there was no more the Professional Conduct (ProfCon) Team could do, it had behaved appropriately and had to accept that sometimes delays were unavoidable;
- why did the PIC DC LC 'relax' the target to six months with a median time to resolution. There had been a previous target of 90% of cases for Stage 1 to have a decision within 16 weeks and the target was being met. The point of PIC DC LC in the first place was because the system was not dealing with concerns adequately / quickly and they were taking a long time to resolution [I] suggest that it was to 'hold PIC's and DC's 'feet to the fire'' to try and get the back log reduced; therefore, at what point would Council consider why it was originally 90% / 16 weeks reduced to a median of six months and targets not being met? Was the interest in having a relaxed target it could meet, or should there be interest in trying to deliver the most effective service and trying to close cases as expediently as possible in order to bring resolution to all parties?
- the comment about the origins of PIC DC LC was strongly refuted: it had been brought in when the Legislative Reform Order (LRO) 2013 (and subsequent transitory period) meant that Council members were no longer sitting on the statutory committees. It should be emphasised that it was not about having a failing system but was part of a package of changes to improve things and for Council to have greater distance from the detail of cases, while maintaining oversight on process, costs and governance. As the statutory committees delivered key functions of the College and a lot of money was spent on them, there needed to be oversight; it was not just about KPIs but included other matters, not least in terms of information 'flow' between the different committees to help support the enforcement of standards. With regards to the other comments, there could be a review; the College also appeared to perform well compared to other regulators – it was not possible to be very specific as its system was quite different, but if the College obtained new legislation, it might be easier to compare.

Furthermore, caution should be expressed against always looking to increase speed; that was only part of the fact. The impact on veterinary professionals on the length of cases was known to be immense – as indicated by the Mind Matters work – but speed should not be reduced at the expense of robustness. Cases were also becoming more complicated and the level of demands from both animal owners and the rest of the process was much higher than it had been 10 years ago. That the College should be mindful of that and not just accepting the difference was absolute and it should continue to look at a framework for how it could continue to improve; but time was not the only factor of success;

- [I] would argue that a former member of Council involved in setting up the Committee had been clear about the reasons for setting it up; to bring down the backlog and length of time

cases took to resolution. Further that it did not matter what other regulators were doing, instead it should be that the College was doing the best it could – that it was slightly better did not necessarily mean it was providing a good service. Finally, historically, targets were better than they were currently;

- the parameters of why the Committee was set up were refuted. It was relevant to consider other regulators because it might be that the College had unrealistic expectations. The principal point was not disputed in that the College should strive to do better but it should also be noted that cases were more complicated than they ever were, not helped by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) investigation into veterinary services and the impact it had on the nature of cases, the complexity, and people's willingness to support the process. It was not just the system that had changed but the overall environment in which the College was working. The point raised was noted;
- with regards to the categorisation of cases, how useful it was when 85% sat in one category – veterinary care – which would probably encompass 100% of the cases by the very nature that there was a concern about a vet or veterinary nurse; did the person raising the concern self-categorise?
 - the categories currently related to the title of the chapters in the Supporting Guidance to the Codes of Professional Conduct (“veterinary care” was Chapter 2); a review of categorisation had not taken place in recent years and could be useful, particularly as the working environment had also changed. It was the ProfCon Team that recorded the categorisation reference, and the issue would be raised with them;
- was there any information about the impact of delays on the people going through the process, in particular with regards to a ‘worst case scenario’ where there might be a death as a result of the wait? If so, did data raise levels of concern and was there a plan to improve it because nobody wanted such an ultimate outcome?
 - work had been undertaken pre-pandemic that considered the mental health impact of the concerns process and the people going through it; there had been an external company that did some research by talking to individuals involved and they had made a range of recommendations that had been picked up by the Mind Matters and ProfCon Teams. Recommendations included timing of letters, communication styles and other matters – as noted on the website. Discussions had also taken place at the end of 2024 with the ProfCon Team on how the timing was now felt to be right to review that again, at least five years on, to see what might have changed; the new Registrar would be tasked with that review. Feedback and ideas were also being gathered from external groups on possible ways to improve.

With regards to data on whether a person had taken their own life, when the College was notified of a member's passing, it might, or might not, be informed of the reason. If there was a suicide using veterinary drugs, for example, the College would occasionally be notified by the coroner, thereafter, if there was a concern involved, it would be able to know through tracking the system, but that was not always what happened. It could not

necessarily be extrapolated that because a person was going through the concerns process that it was the cause of suicidal ideation, it could be that the person was already struggling and that was part of the reason for the concern to arise in the first instance. It was complicated, but it remained the fact that one suicide was one too many.

The College therefore continued to work in a range of ways to look at suicide prevention more generally. It should also be acknowledged that the people that have raised the concerns, be they professionals or members of the public, were also in a difficult place. It was part of the College's compassionate regulator framework to try to address the issues and there was a lot of ongoing work, such as the funding of the ProfCon Investigation Support Service; feedback was also sought at the end of the process asking people about their experiences in order to actively learn and question ourselves, looking to do better without reducing the quality;

- there was also VetNI to support members residing in Ireland;
- a colleague who had been through the process in a very prolonged case could not have spoken more highly of the support they had been given by the person assigned them by the College to guide them through the process. It also highlighted that it was a case that was delayed by the failure of the respondent to reply in a timely manner; it was not all in the College's remit. The College was aware that members going through the process were likely to be in a distressed state of mind and it continued to strive for improvement;
 - o constant scrutiny was essential, with appropriate support and resources supplied;
- the General Medical Council (GMC) had undertaken some work on how members under its investigation process responded and how their mental health was impacted; it was published in the early 2020s. There might be suggestions that would work across regulators, although it was acknowledged that they had far more numbers than the veterinary profession;
 - o the College had been asked to feed its Mind Matters work into that report.

44. The discussion was drawn to a close.

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee

45. There were no comments or questions raised, and the report was noted.

Disciplinary Committee and RVN Disciplinary Committee

46. Details of individual cases were on the College website. There were no comments or questions raised.

Notices of motion

47. There had been no notices of motion received.

Questions

48. There had been no questions received.

Any other College business (unclassified items)

49. There was no other business to report.

Risk Register, equality and diversity (unclassified items)

50. There were no items raised to add to the College's Risk Register from the open session of the meeting.

Date of next meeting

51. The next scheduled meeting of Council was Thursday, 13 March 2025, commencing at 10:00 am and reconvening in the afternoon. The meeting would be held in person at the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), London.

Matters for decision by Council and for report (confidential items)

Major projects – update (confidential)

52. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 1 – 6.

Content Management System (CMS) project plan – update (confidential)

53. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 7 – 12.

Annual retention fee payment arrangements for veterinary surgeons 2025-2026 (confidential)

54. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 13 – 15.

Legislative change (confidential)

55. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 16 – 26.

Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) – update (confidential)

56. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 27 – 38.

RCVS strategic brand review – update (confidential)

57. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 39 – 58.

RCVS Strategic Plan 2025-2029 (confidential)

58. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 59 – 67.

Any other College business (confidential items)

Comments on classified appendices from Council or committee meetings (confidential)

59. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraphs 68 – 69.

Other business (confidential)

60. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraph 70.

Risk Register, Equality and Diversity (confidential)

61. This information is available in the classified appendix at paragraph 71.

62. The meeting was brought to a close.

63. Council members went into a training session that was not recorded.

Summary	
Meeting	RCVS Council
Date	13 March 2025
Title	Governance reform
Summary	This paper sets out a number of outstanding interrelated questions in relation to governance reform, and draws them together into a possible model of a future governance/committee structure, as suggested by the Legislative Change Working Party.
Decisions required	Council members are asked for their approval of the model and the individual recommendations that underpin it.
Attachments	Annex A – Governance reform model diagram
Author	Ben Myring Policy & Public Affairs Manager b.myring@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Annex A	Unclassified	n/a

RCVS governance reform

Introduction

- 1) The composition of RCVS Council is currently set out in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (VSA). It is therefore necessary that the RCVS takes a view on what provisions should be in any replacement Act. It is likely that the details of this provision would be in secondary legislation, and therefore be more easily amended than at present, but some high-level aspects may be retained in primary legislation. Ultimately, the details of future governance reform will be in the hands of government and Parliament, and may differ from the College's preferred option.
- 2) In January 2024, RCVS Council agreed on a number of principles of governance reform, which together would bring College governance more in line with the regulatory norm. In February 2024, Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC) also agreed on a model of governance reform, and agreed that it should go out to consultation alongside the RCVS Council recommendations. These went out to consultation between 10 June and 22 July 2024, before returning to Council for further consideration in November 2024.
- 3) At its November meeting, Council considered the consultation results and agreed on the following recommendations:
 - a) That elections of veterinary surgeons to Council should be replaced with an independent appointment system for veterinary surgeons and, in the future, other veterinary professionals.
 - b) That Council should move towards parity of lay and professional members.
 - c) That the Veterinary Schools Council should no longer appoint members to RCVS Council.
 - d) That the College should develop proposals for retaining a representative component on a committee or Council responsible for the development of the profession, which might include elected representatives.
- 4) Council deferred a number of other questions, noting that they were interrelated and required further consideration:
 - a) Whether Council should have full lay parity, or preserve a small registrant majority.
 - b) Whether to retain a Council of 24 members.
 - c) Whether to recommend flexibility of the composition of the professional members of Council to allow for a potential increase in the number of allied professionals.

- d) Whether the College should investigate introducing a subsidiary governing body/Council for veterinary surgeons, to sit alongside those of the allied professions and below the governing RCVS Council.
- 5) These questions are the subject of this paper, which sets out options for reform. The new Legislative Change Working Party considered these questions at its 22 February 2025 meeting, and its suggested solutions are found at the end of the paper.
- 6) In addition to the questions above, Council also deferred other questions that are less connected to the overall structure of governance and so will be returned to later, such as the possibility of separating the chair of Council from presidency, term limits for any such separate chair, and options for independent oversight of the College.
- 7) Governance reform will inevitably require a wider review of committee structure and membership, however this is not a matter for legislation and can follow any final decision on governance structure.

Outstanding questions

Lay parity

- 8) Parity between lay and registrant members on the governing body of a regulator is a key principle of successive governments' policies on professional regulation, e.g. human healthcare, law, architecture. In human healthcare these principles are codified in the Law Commission's 2014 report, which stresses that registrants must not be in a majority. This principle helps to demonstrate that the regulator acts in the public interest, and not in the interest of registrants, where those interests differ. It also balances sectoral knowledge with outside expertise and experience. While some have raised concerns about reducing the amount of sectoral knowledge on Council it should be remembered that the purpose of a governing body is to set strategy and ensure that due process is being followed; work on the details of policy and standards should be a matter for committees, supported by stakeholder and other expert input.
- 9) Anything short of full lay parity would leave the College open to the accusation that its governance structures are unsuitable, given its core regulatory role and the comprehensive move away from registrant-majority models of self-regulation in other sectors. The College anticipates that the government will expect College governance to reflect the regulatory norm. Further, it is notable that the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has highlighted the self-regulation model "was historically more common in professional services regulation in the UK. However, the suitability of that model in modern professional markets has been called into question and in some professions, such as architects and solicitors, as well as doctors, it has been replaced by an independent regulator."¹ It

¹ CMA, Regulatory Framework for Veterinary Professionals and Veterinary Services Vets Market Investigation Working Paper, 6 February 2025, p17

is perhaps likely that any College recommendation to retain a registrant majority would be seen as a half-measure and contrary to the principles of public assurance, and thus it should instead recommend full parity.

Retaining a Council of 24 members

- 10) In developing its preliminary reform recommendations, Council voted to retain a Council of 24 members, rather than moving towards the regulatory norm of 10-12 members. A number of respondents to the consultation, including the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) questioned this, and for BVA this was linked to a proposal to create a separate 'Royal College Council' responsible for the College's 'Charter activities' – this latter proposal is reflected in the College's decision to develop proposals for "a committee or Council responsible for the development of the profession".
- 11) Further, this paper will discuss below the possibility that there should be a 'veterinary surgeons council' sitting below the College's governing body and alongside Veterinary Nurses Council, and any new Councils created for allied professionals. Such a body would be a locus for discussion of matters relating only to veterinary surgeons, with relevant committees referring matters for consultation or decision before they were passed to RCVS Council for final approval.
- 12) The addition of a subsidiary 'veterinary surgeons council' with a robust delegation scheme, alongside reform to the way the College's 'upstream regulation' activities are governed, could strengthen the argument for reducing the size of RCVS Council to the regulatory norm, in effect creating a 'board' similar to those of other regulators.

Ensuring flexibility to increase the number of allied professionals on Council

- 13) One of Council's preliminary reform recommendations was to seek flexibility to increase the number of allied professionals on the governing body over time. In order not to change the overall size of Council it was suggested that this be done by reducing the number of veterinary surgeons. It was further suggested that veterinary surgeons should always retain a majority within the overall number of registrants on Council. So, for instance, in a Council of 24 members, in which 12 were registrants, no less than seven would be veterinary surgeons, allowing up to five allied professionals (including veterinary nurses) to sit on Council. This would allow all or most of the allied professionals currently anticipated to be regulated by the RCVS in future to have a member on Council at any one time.
- 14) If Council was reduced to a 12-member 'board', with full lay parity, then there would only be six registrant members. If three to four of these were veterinary surgeons, and if veterinary nurses were guaranteed a member, then that would only leave one to two places for allied professionals, and thus it would need to be accepted that not all allied professionals would have a member on Council at any one time. However, as noted above, this would be less important if each regulated profession had its own subsidiary council.

Introducing a subsidiary ‘veterinary surgeons council’

- 15) As noted above, it has been suggested that veterinary surgeons should have their own subsidiary council, reporting to the governing body, and sitting alongside VNC and any new Allied Professional councils. The existence of this body, its composition and possible election, would not need to be underpinned by legislation.
- 16) As with VNC now, relevant committees would report into this new Council for consultation or decision. Careful consideration would need to be given to the delegation scheme to ensure that the relationship between ‘RCVS board’ and the ‘veterinary surgeons council’ was clear.
- 17) Introducing this new body would have a cost implication for the College. However, it may help to reassure the veterinary profession that there remained a body within the College that focused narrowly on the regulation and professional advancement of veterinary surgeons. It would also help to reassure veterinary nurses and other allied professions that they had greater parity within the College, with the governing body and ‘veterinary council’ no longer being synonymous.

Proposals for a committee or council responsible for the development of the profession

- 18) The RCVS is primarily a regulator. While a small minority of functions are non-regulatory in nature, such as the RCVS Fellowship and the College’s Honours and Awards, the majority of College functions fall into one of two categories:
- a) Core regulatory functions - ensuring that *professionals are fit to practise*: those relating to getting on the register, staying on the register, and being removed from the register.
 - b) Upstream regulatory functions – ensuring that *the profession is fit for purpose*. These functions are largely currently overseen by the College’s Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC), the current Terms of Reference for which are appended to the end of the paper.
- 19) ‘Core’ and ‘upstream’ functions do not clearly divide into ‘Veterinary Surgeons Act’ and ‘Royal Charter’ functions, and some functions that would once have been considered ‘Charter activities’ are now commonly carried out by other regulators who do not have Royal Charters. Meanwhile, some ‘core’ regulatory functions are carried out under the Charter, for example, the registration of veterinary nurses. There would be some renewed clarity under a new Act, but it is likely that, over subsequent years, there may again be regulatory activities carried out under the Charter.
- 20) In November 2024, RCVS Council agreed to investigate the possibility of retaining an elected veterinary element on a future council or committee, which would report to RCVS Council, focused on upstream regulation and development of the professions. This would acknowledge the unique status of the RCVS without risking administrative divisions, and allow reform to bring RCVS Council closer to the regulatory norm. The composition of such a committee would likely continue to be a matter for the

College that did not require legislative reform, and thus could potentially be trialled ahead of legislative change.

- 21) Noting that all future committee composition would be different once RCVS Council was fully appointed, one obvious solution would be to reform the selection of APC's membership so that it remained primarily or partly elected following RCVS Council reform. However, consideration would need to be given to how this would impact the functioning of APC, and the impact on the current 'Council lead' system for workstreams reporting to APC.
- 22) In February 2025, APC was asked to discuss this question so that any views on possible reform could be passed to the Working Party for consideration. The Committee's observations included the following:
- a) Some argued that including an elected element on APC might make governance changes more palatable to the professions.
 - b) Others suggested that elections to anything other than the governing body would not be seen as an acceptable alternative to most opponents of reform.
 - c) Thought would need to be given how a reformed APC would interface with the Fellowship
 - d) That 'council' was a word best avoided in case of confusion with RCVS Council, or perhaps best avoided even if RCVS Council were to be renamed 'the Board', as its role should not be confused with other bodies with 'council' in their name such as VN Council or any future 'veterinary surgeons council'.
 - e) That APC needs skillsets as much as any other, and that if appointments deliver this better than elections then APC should not be an exception.
 - f) That including delegates from representative bodies was not a good alternative to elections or independent appointment, as the representative bodies already have means of inputting into College policy through joint officers meetings and direct lobbying.
 - g) That any committee overseeing this work must be inclusive of the whole veterinary team, and have lay input.
 - h) That any new body would have to have narrow and clear term of reference to ensure that it was not seen as a separate locus of power that could oppose College policy.
 - i) That if the purpose was a consultative body that could be used to allow the professions to have input in College policy, then would a 'veterinary advisory group', sitting alongside the Public Advisory Group, not achieve this purpose better? This could have input across College policy and not just on APC matters, and could be partly elected and/or appointed to ensure a breadth of experience across various categories.

Proposed governance model

23) The interrelated decisions above can be mapped to a model of governance/committee structure. This is set out as a diagram in Annex A, which contrasts the status quo with the potential new structure.

24) At its February meeting, the Legislative Change Working Party members were asked for their views on these individual recommendations and the potential overall model. Though members were not unanimous in their views across all questions, there was broad support for the following recommendations for any new primary and secondary legislation underpinning RCVS governance:

- a) Full parity of professional and lay members of the governing body
- b) A smaller membership of the governing body, which should become a 'board', more narrowly focused on strategy and governance rather than the details of policy or operational matters. The size should be closer to the regulatory norm of 10-12, but there could be some flexibility here, for instance if government wanted a greater number of allied professionals on the governing body.
- c) That veterinary surgeons should be predominant among the professional members, noting their broader role across species and in public health, and their centrality to the veterinary team. That there should be at least one veterinary nurse member. In addition there was value in having other allied professional members on the governing body, (though not necessarily from all allied professions at all times).

25) In addition, the working party made the following suggestions about governance structure below the governing body (though this is unlikely to be a matter for legislation):

- a) That each regulated profession should have its own professional council, parallel to the existing Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC), which would report to the governing board. These would be focus points for profession-specific discussion and decision-making, with some committees potentially reporting in to them or having a 'dotted line' to them in the way that VNC does now. Newly-regulated allied professions would have their own councils, and the autonomy that this brought would reduce the need for them to all have members on the board at all times. These councils would be dealing with both core regulatory activities (in addition to 'upstream' ones), and so as with governing body members should be appointed.

26) While not directly related to governance structure, the working party also suggested the following, which may require further discussion prior to decision:

- a) A 'veterinary advisory group' could have value, and this could include an elected element if it was felt that this would help the professions to feel that they had a stronger voice within the

College after the introduction of independent appointment for the governing body. Such a group could advise on both core and upstream activities.

- b) Once there was agreement on the overall governance structure, further consideration would need to be given to how committees should be populated, e.g. from the board/councils membership, through separate appointment, through co-opting, or some mix of the above. This could include linking committees, councils and the board via the appointment of chairs.

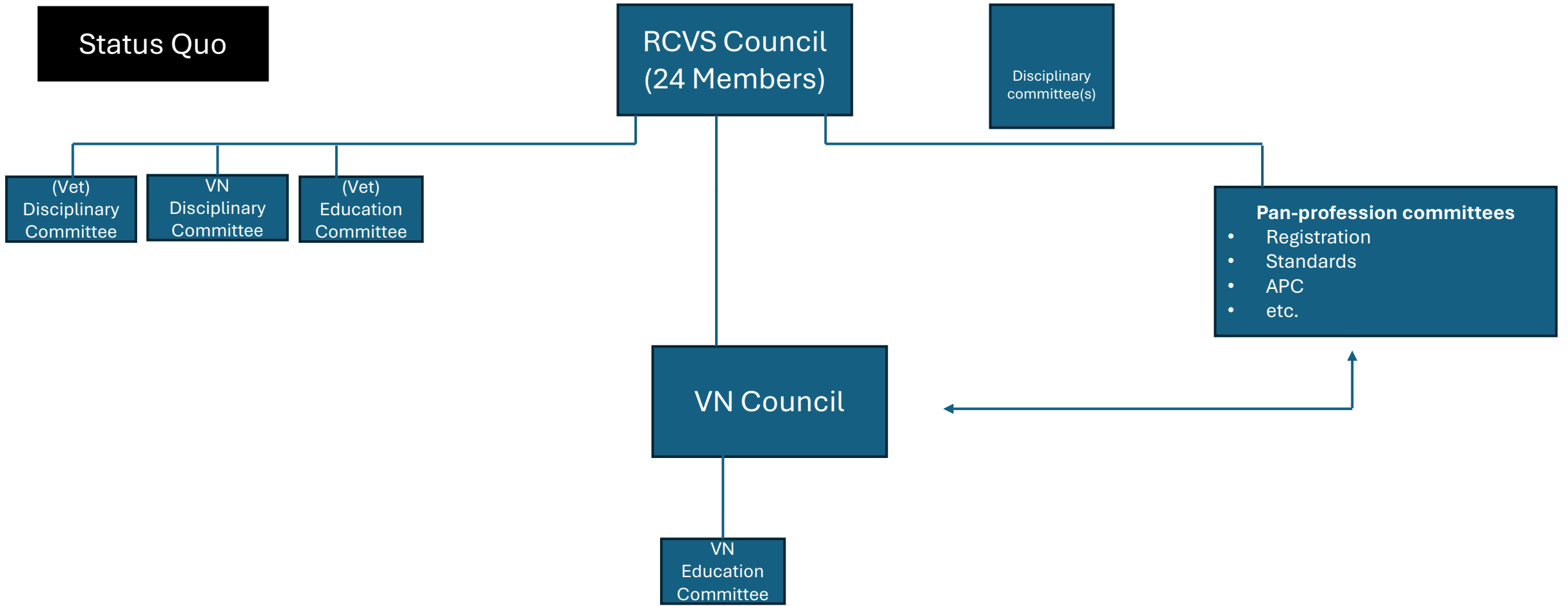
27) The Working Party also considered questions in relation to separating the presidency and chair, but this matter requires further discussion before being returned to Council

Decisions

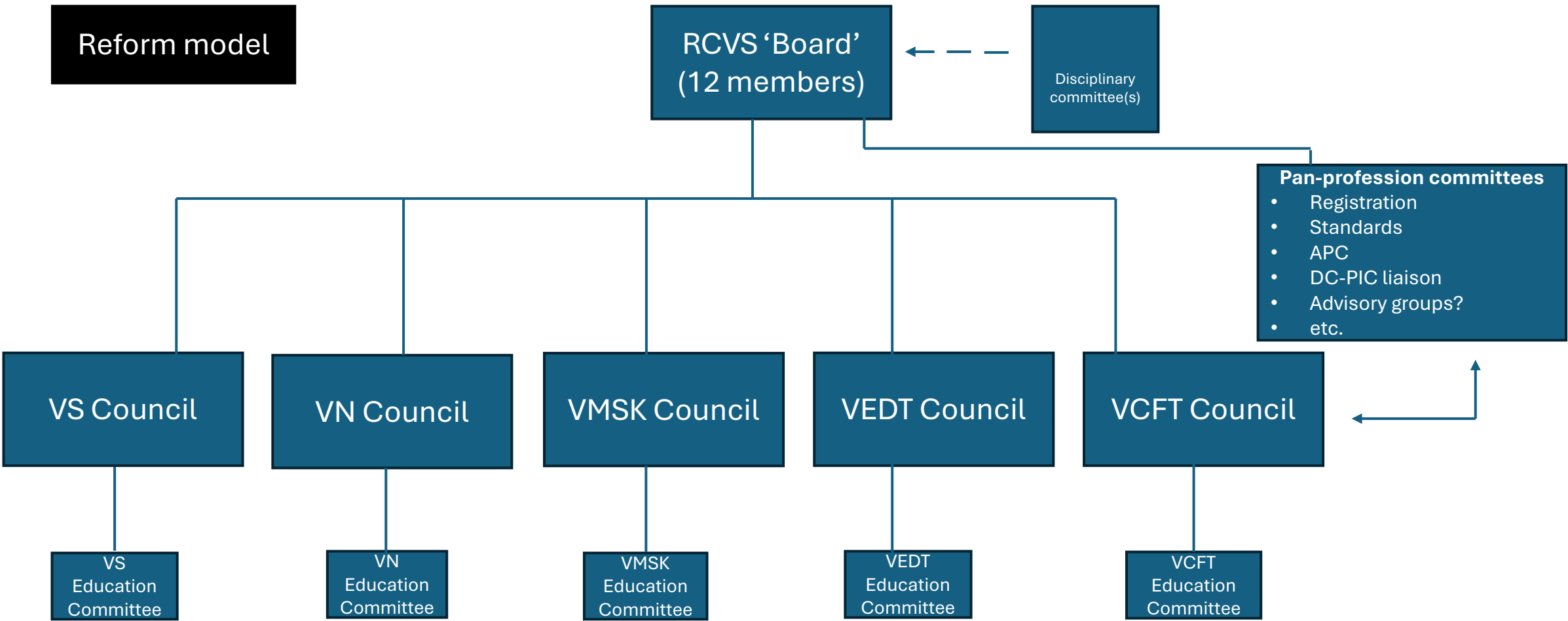
28) Council is asked whether they agree with the proposal outlined above, further to its earlier decisions concerning governance reform, as a starting position for discussions with Defra.

29) Should Council wish to vote on the proposals in a granular way, then it might vote on the following recommendations:

- a) To recommend full parity between lay and registrant members on the governing body.
- b) To aim to reduce the size of Council to closer to the regulatory norm of 10-12, and for this to become a 'board'.
- c) For veterinary surgeons to remain predominant among professional members on the governing body, for VNs to continue to have at least one member on the board, and for allied professional members to be included (but not necessarily all allied professionals included at all times).
- d) The introduction of a separate councils for veterinary surgeons, and any newly-regulated allied professions, to sit alongside VNC, and for all such councils to report to the governing body.



Reform model



Meeting	RCVS Council
Date	13 March 2025
Title	Proposal for continuation of the Public Advisory Group (PAG)
Classification	Unclassified
Summary	This paper makes a proposal for the continuation of the PAG following its extended pilot period.
Decisions required	<p>The original agreement was that the PAG would be reviewed after one year. In September 2024, Council agreed to an extension until March 2025, with a proposal to be brought at that point for its continuation.</p> <p>This paper seeks agreement that the PAG will continue on a permanent footing, and outlines proposals for how its work might be taken forward.</p>
Attachments	Annex A – Terms of Reference for the Public Advisory Group
Author	Lizzie Lockett / CEO l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0725

Classifications

Document	Classification ¹	Rationales ²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained	
Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft.'
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation, or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.
²Classification rationales	
Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Proposal for continuation of the Public Advisory Group

Background

1. The first meeting of the Public Advisory Group (PAG) took place in September 2023. As this was a new initiative for the College, it was originally set up as a one-year pilot. In September 2024, a six-month extension was granted, with a commitment to bring proposals for the future of the Group to the March 2025 meeting.
2. The purpose of the PAG is to:
 - a. To enable the RCVS to better understand issues affecting the public, so that this can inform future strategy, policy and consultation
 - b. To act as a sounding board with whom the RCVS can confidentially consult on draft policy whilst under development
 - c. To support the development and improvement of RCVS services for the public, for example, Find a Vet, Check the Registers and the concerns process
 - d. To help to pilot and test messages and communications to ensure they are clear and understandable
3. The full terms of reference can be found in Annex A.
4. Recruitment of PAG members was carried out by means of a press release to animal owner publications and websites, via social media, and via veterinary practices. An initial sift of applications was carried out by RCVS staff, mainly to take out people with clear conflicts of interest, and a longlist then discussed with the Chair, Council member Louise Allum. Originally there were 34 members.
5. Although the PAG reports to the Officer Team, an annual report has been submitted to Council.
6. Since its inception, the PAG has provided comment and input on the following topics:
 - a. Information for animal owners to help inform their interactions with veterinary practices – for the RCVS website
 - b. Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) investigation (across several meetings)
 - c. Contextualised care
 - d. Veterinary Clinical Career Pathways – who is who in the veterinary team?
 - e. The RCVS Strategic Plan
7. It meets roughly quarterly, via two-hour online meetings. The day of the week and time of day is varied to be inclusive. The meeting usually includes at least one period – an hour or so – of discussion in small break-out groups. This is facilitated by College staff, with a summary of discussions appended to the minutes of the meeting, to avoid lengthy time being spent on feedback.

Feedback from PAG members

8. When the PAG was first set up, a survey was completed by members outlining their areas of interest and the animals that they owned/kept. It also asked about the topics that the Group

members felt would be important to include in any information available to animal owners, to inform our website development work.

9. A more recent survey has asked members for their feedback on the work of the Group thus far. The general feedback was extremely positive. Of the current membership, 17 responded (63% of active members). People had enjoyed being part of the PAG, felt it was forward-thinking of the College to have set it up, really appreciated the passion and diversity of viewpoints expressed, and felt that it was well set up to enable them to express their personal perspectives.
10. When asked to rate a series of statements in terms of strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, all those who answered said that they either agreed or strongly agreed, with the following:
 - a. I feel clear about the role of the PAG
 - b. The topics discussed have been relevant to me
 - c. The format of the meetings has enabled me to express my views
 - d. The meetings created a supportive environment and I felt able to share my views with confidence
 - e. I felt I was given enough background to the topics to make meaningful contributions.
11. For the following statements, the majority agreed or strongly agreed, with some neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Perhaps this is not surprising given it may be hard, as none of the projects discussed have yet come to conclusion, for individuals to appreciate their personal impact:
 - a. I feel I have made a useful contribution to the work of the RCVS
 - b. I feel I have made a useful contribution to improving animal health and welfare
 - c. I feel I have made a useful contribution to improving the consumer experience of veterinary services
12. In terms of practicalities, the majority felt online meetings were best for them and that daytime meetings were best. There was one call in the comments section for an early evening meeting.
13. Although we aim to keep the pre-meeting reading light, slightly over half of those who expressed an opinion other than 'neither agree nor disagree' would prefer more written information in advance of the meetings, which will be addressed, where possible.
14. There were then some free-text options, which a smaller number of people completed. Themes arising were follows.
15. Do you have any additional comments about the meetings, for example, format, timing, length, topics?
 - a. The format of the meetings was felt to work well, especially the break-out groups, which allowed people to have their say
 - b. The passion and knowledge from across the group, especially the diversity of thought, was appreciated
 - c. The chairing and organisation of the meetings was complemented
 - d. It was felt that the CMA work had rather overshadowed the meetings but it was understood why this was and the opportunity to feed in was appreciated

- e. The meetings passed quickly and there could be the option to extend
 - f. More background reading would be appreciated
 - g. The work had felt rewarding
16. Are there any other topics you feel it would be useful for the PAG to discuss in the future?
- a. 'News' from the Group – ie what is happening for them
 - b. More on farm animal topics
 - c. End of life decisions for animals
 - d. Guidance for prospective animal owners
 - e. Continuity of care
 - f. Elements of the RCVS strategic plan that relate to community and consumers
 - g. Availability, accessibility and pricing of medicines
 - h. Impact of insurance companies on animal owners
 - i. Focus groups on equine, commercial farming, animal-related industries eg horse racing
 - j. Why vets and VNs are leaving the industry
 - k. How / when data should be shared between practices where animals are registered with more than one
 - l. Need for vets to understand how to diagnose and treat backyard chickens
 - m. Guidelines for vets and the general public about what to do and what to expect when an injured animal is found
 - n. Better communication and collaboration between vets and doctors
 - o. Wider links between the vet profession and other parts of the animal welfare system
 - p. How or when vet practices can be sanctioned in the event of poor performance
17. Do you have any thoughts on how the PAG should evolve going forward?
- a. Add dairy farmer and organic farmer to the group
 - b. Add exotics owners to the group
 - c. Add someone who runs an animal sanctuary to the group – ie for animals that can't be rehomed for complex reasons
 - d. Fill the places left by a few members who have dropped out
 - e. Rotate out some members to keep conversation fresh
 - f. Have some expert groups/focus groups
 - g. Have a larger panel to gather views from
 - h. Possibility of a chat room for PAG members between meetings
 - i. Information/tasks to be sent between meetings to be done by email
 - j. Opportunity for the group members to meet up in person at some point
 - k. Ask veterinary practices what questions they would like to ask of the group
 - l. Include policy makers with the group

Proposal

18. The original need was to ensure we have a regular mechanism to gain the views of animal owners and keepers to help support both our regulatory and non-regulatory work. This has not gone away. In fact, given the CMA investigation and also our strategic direction with respect to ensuring that we regulate in an holistic way, working with all of those impacted, it has become even more important. It therefore seems to be less an issue of whether we continue with the PAG, than what changes, if any, need to be made to ensure its effectiveness going forward.

19. The following proposals are made with the aim of enhancing the work of the PAG, and identifying where additional public voices may be brought into our work.

Membership of the Group

20. It is proposed that the four members of the PAG who have not attended any meetings since they were appointed be written to and removed from the Group. A further two have asked to be removed as their personal circumstances have changed. In addition, each meeting generally sees a few apologies being sent, plus members signed up for an initial year and may not wish to continue. For all these reasons, there is scope for a further ten or so people to be added to the group in order to boost numbers, bring some new views, and address some of the gaps identified in terms of animal ownership, without making the PAG unwieldy.
21. These gaps include camelid owners, exotic pet owners, and dairy/beef farmers. It has been discussed whether it would make sense to move farm animal owners/keepers into a separate group, however, the PAG felt that there was benefit in sharing views across a diverse range of species, so in the first instance we will try to fill the gaps by adding to the PAG. This will be kept under review.
22. We will carry out another recruitment round. It should be easier to recruit this time around as we can use quotes from members of the Group and examples of actual work carried out to better explain what is required.

Activities of the Group / format of meetings

23. The way in which the PAG currently works was well supported by members so there seems to be no reason for any major changes. Longer meetings will be trialled, together with sending more detailed paperwork ahead of time, where appropriate.
24. As projects to which the Group has inputted come to fruition, it will be important to ensure we close the loop by giving them an overview of where their work has been used, so that in future they can feel more confident about the impact that they have had.
25. The topics for meetings are largely driven by College priorities but the subjects raised at par 16 will be addressed where feasible/appropriate. The suggestion of asking practices if there are topics they would like the PAG to address is a good one. This will be considered, alongside asking associations for their views.
26. Although there was a call for an in-person meeting, given loss of earnings and travel expenses for approximately 30 people for a day would come to around £15,000, this may be cost prohibitive. There are also some members of the PAG with accessibility issues so such an approach may not be inclusive. Thought will be given to meet ups with one or two members who are close by if we happen to be in the location for other meetings, and / or inviting them to Regional Question Times, etc.

Seeking additional input

27. It was always going to be the case that the PAG was only one way in which public views were brought into our work. Market research, formal consultations, and inviting the wider public to take part in specific meetings and events will also play a part – either RCVS-hosted or where we may have a presence or stand.

28. It is recommended that thought be given to the setting up of a larger panel of animal owners/keepers for more quantitative research purposes, regularly asking topical questions. The pros and cons of this versus using standard public research tools, such as independent omnibus surveys, will be considered.

Reporting

29. It is recommended that there continues to be an annual report from the PAG Chair to Council – at the September meeting. In addition, as now, any findings or views from the Group that relate to particular workstreams will be fed into that work (for example, the CMA discussions feed into the CMA Working Group).

Decisions to be made

30. Council is invited to review the proposals and agree:
 - a. That the PAG should continue on a permanent footing
 - b. To adopt the proposals for change to improve effectiveness outlined above
 - c. That the President be asked to write to the PAG members to thank them for taking part in the pilot and for all of the contributions they have made, to formally recognise their work so far

Annex A – About the Public Advisory Group

1. The Public Advisory Group (PAG) exists to support the activities of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, which are to set, uphold and advance the educational, ethical and clinical standards of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, in the interests of animal health and welfare and public health. The RCVS works in the public interest and the PAG will help to ensure that this objective is met.
2. Its members will comprise users of veterinary services and will include, but not be limited to, owners/keepers of companion animals, and equine and production animals. A pool of members will be selected, from whom smaller groups will be drawn to focus on specific tasks.
3. The PAG will be chaired by a member of RCVS Council, decided by the Officer team based on applications.
4. Terms of reference are as follows:
 - a. To enable the RCVS to better understand issues affecting the public, so that this can inform future strategy, policy and consultation
 - b. To act as a sounding board with whom the RCVS can confidentially consult on draft policy whilst under development
 - c. To support the development and improvement of RCVS services for the public, for example, Find a Vet, Check the Registers and the concerns process
 - d. To help to pilot and test messages and communications to ensure they are clear and understandable
5. The PAG will report to the Officer Team. Members will be regularly rotated and are likely to serve for between two and four years.
6. The PAG will not decide on College policy or strategy.
7. Members of the PAG will be compensated for attending meetings at the same rate as RCVS Council members. Where possible, meetings will be held online, to improve access, diversity and inclusion, and reduce the environmental impact.
8. The Group will initially be set up for a 12-month pilot and reviewed thereafter.

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	13 March 2025
Title	Council effectiveness
Summary	This paper provides information following the 2025 Council effectiveness survey along with a comparison of the results from 2023. It provides recommendations to re-form the Council Culture group and invites Council to consider how to preserve the positive scores where no active action is being taken.
Decisions required	That the Council Culture group temporarily reforms.
Attachments	None
Author	Lisa Hall People Director l.hall@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Council Effectiveness

Background

1. At the January 2025 Council meeting members were reminded of the survey results completed by the then Council members in 2023 and the actions taken to understand the effectiveness of Council based on a series of questions aligned with the Governance App, a self-completion survey used for understanding how effective Boards are.
2. Following agreement by members in 2023, Council undertook the same survey in 2025 to establish progress.
3. 17 Council members completed the survey in January 2025.

In summary

4. The results of the survey for 2025 are shown in **Annex A**, along with the scores from the 2023 data. Each question was a maximum score of five.
5. It is reassuring to know that the work of the Council Culture Group has been positive as the overall score has improved from 2023 by 16.38 points.
6. The areas that saw the biggest improvement in scores were of board effectiveness (7.95 increase) and equality, diversity and inclusion (5.42 increase).
7. Some areas saw no improvement, they are integrity, decision making and the least improved area being that of organisational purpose, across all three areas the scores were marginally lower than the previous survey. It is likely that being in between strategic plans has had an impact on the scores along with different members completing the 2025 survey, therefore not being fully aware of the actions and progress taken since 2023.
8. Not all sections of the survey have the same number of questions, so scores between each section will be higher and lower, the only comparison score is that of the years so 2023 vs 2025.
9. Scores are highlighted in red to indicate where the score for 2025 shows a decrease of more than 0.5 than the score in 2023 and in green to show an increase of more than 0.5. There are only two areas which are highlighted in red.

Suggested action

10. It is recommended that Council briefly discuss the findings and agree that the Council Culture group temporarily reform to review the findings in more detail, where the results show no progress. Its worth noting that the original Culture group member may not be the same.
11. It is also recommended that the Council Culture group make recommendations about what method of assessing effectiveness is used going forward, whilst being mindful that each year any

comparison of previous years results is not being undertaken by the same group, due to Council rotations.

12. It is also suggested that the Council Culture group provide recommendations on areas of focus.

13. It is recommended that the full survey information be shared at new Council members induction, so they are aware of progress and fully prepared in the future if a survey is to be used again.

To consider

14. How will the positive scores be maintained in the absence of active work?

15. Not all original Council Culture group members will be available for this work, therefore a smaller group with some new members will be a good option.

Annex A

Organisational purpose	2023	2025
We understand what the RCVS is here to achieve.	4.44	4.23
We can demonstrate that the RCVS is achieving its purposes under the Act and Charter.	4.04	3.82
We periodically check that our purposes are relevant.	3.36	3.82
We can all explain the RCVS's public benefit.	3.8	3.76
We regularly evaluate the difference the RCVS is making.	2.96	3.76
We regularly review our financial sustainability.	4.32	4.11
We recognise our responsibility to the wider environment we operate in.	4.12	4.11
We act in a way that's consistent with the RCVS's values.	4.16	3.35
Total for organisational purpose	31.2	27.14
Integrity		
We have a clear set of aims and a plan for achieving them.	4.04	3.35
We act with honesty, trustworthiness and care.	4.48	4.29
We act in the best interests of animal health and welfare, and public health.	4.28	4.29
We make objective and independent decisions.	3.88	4.23
No one person or group has undue influence in the RCVS.	3.84	4.23
All of our decisions are consistent with the RCVS's values.	4.08	4.41
The RCVS follows the law, relevant codes and standards, and other good practice initiatives.	4.28	4.41
We promote a culture in which everyone feels safe and respected.	4.08	3.94
We understand how real and perceived conflicts of interests can affect the RCVS's performance and reputation.	4.2	3.94
Total for Integrity	37.16	37.09
Leadership		
Council members disclose any actual or potential conflicts and deal with these in line with the RCVS's governance documentation and a regularly reviewed conflicts of interest policy.	4.00	4.52
We live the RCVS's vision and values.	4.04	4.58

We take collective and individual responsibility for our actions.	3.96	4.58
We have clear priorities, structures and processes.	4.00	4.58
We have proper procedures for the appointment, supervision, support, appraisal, remuneration and, if necessary, dismissal of the Chief Executive.	3.80	3.82
Council members' roles and responsibilities are formally recorded.	3.92	3.82
Our values underpin our decisions and the RCVS's activities.	4.12	4.11
We recognise, respect and welcome diverse, different and, at times, conflicting Council member views.	4.08	4.11
We provide oversight, direction, support and constructive challenge to the organisation and its staff.	3.76	4.11
Staff feel confident and able to provide the information, advice and feedback necessary to Council.	3.72	4.11
Total for Leadership	39.4	42.34
Board effectiveness		
We give sufficient time to the RCVS to carry out our responsibilities effectively.	3.84	4.76
Our culture, behaviours and processes help us to be effective.	3.6	4.76
We take decisions collectively and confidently.	3.88	4.47
Once decisions are made, Council unites behind them and accepts them as binding.	3.72	4.47
Where differences of opinion arise, we take time to consider the range of perspectives and outcomes, respecting all viewpoints.	4.2	4.41
Council has, and regularly considers, the skills, knowledge and experience it needs to govern, lead and deliver the RCVS's purposes effectively	3.48	4.41
Council is an appropriate size that the needs of the RCVS's work can be carried out and changes to Council's composition can be managed without too much disruption.	3.4	4.41
Council members receive a proper induction when they join Council that covers all areas of the RCVS's work.	3.36	4.41
Council reviews its own performance every year, including that of the officer team.	2.8	4.16
Total for board effectiveness	32.28	40.26
ED&I		

The principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded in the organisation and help to deliver the RCVS's public benefit.	4.28	4.17
Council is more effective because it reflects different perspectives, experiences and skills, including, where applicable, from stakeholders.	4.04	4.17
We assess our own understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion and identify any gaps in understanding which could be filled by discussion, learning, research or information.	3.44	4.17
We regularly assess the RCVS's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.	3.36	4
Council assesses how it demonstrates inclusive behaviours in its decision making and how it engages with all its stakeholders.	3.36	4
We set a clear organisational approach to equality, diversity and inclusion in line with the RCVS's aims, strategy, culture and values.	3.96	4
Our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion is supported by appropriate plans, policies, milestones, targets and timelines.	3.56	4
We ensure that there are appropriate arrangements and resources in place to monitor and achieve the organisation's equality, diversity and inclusion plans and targets.	3.36	4.52
We lead the organisation's progress towards achieving its equality, diversity and inclusion plans and targets and discuss updates on this.	3.36	4.52
We periodically take part in learning and/or reflection about equality, diversity and inclusion and understand our responsibilities in this area.	3.52	4.11
Total for ED&I	36.24	41.66
Openness and accountability		
The organisation's work and impact are appreciated by all its stakeholders.	2.64	4.11
The RCVS is seen to have legitimacy in representing its stakeholders.	3.24	4.52
Council identifies the key stakeholders with an interest in the RCVS's work.	4.08	4.52
We make sure that there is a strategy for regular and effective communication with stakeholders about the RCVS's purposes, values, work and achievements.	3.64	3.82
We consult stakeholders about significant changes to the RCVS's policies.	4.08	3.82
We get regular reports on the positive and negative feedback and complaints given to the RCVS.	3.28	3.82

We learn from mistakes and use this learning to improve performance and internal decision-making.	3.36	3.82
We have a transparent, well-publicised, effective and timely process for making, handling and resolving complaints.	3.72	4
We publish the process for setting the remuneration of any senior staff, and their remuneration levels, in the RCVS's annual report.	3.96	4
Total for openness and accountability	32	36.43
Decision making		
We are clear that Council's main focus is on strategy, performance and assurance, rather than operational matters.	3.64	3.94
We have a sound decision-making and monitoring framework which helps the organisation deliver its purposes under the Act and Charter.	3.88	3.94
We are aware of the range of financial and non-financial risk we need to monitor and manage.	4.12	4.23
Our committees have suitable terms of reference and membership.	4.4	4.23
The work of any third party suppliers or services is carried out in the interest of the RCVS, and in line with its values.	3.92	4.11
Our operational plans and budgets are in line with the RCVS's purposes, strategic aims and resources.	4.36	4.11
We regularly monitor and check performance against the RCVS's strategic aims, operational plans and budgets.	4.04	4.23
We regularly review the RCVS's specific significant risk and make plans to mitigate and manage them appropriately.	4.12	4.23
We review the effectiveness of the RCVS's approach to risk at least every year.	3.96	3.64
We have an effective process for appointing and reviewing the RCVS's external auditors.	4.12	3.64
Total for Decision making	40.56	40.3
Overall total	248.84	265.22

Meeting	RCVS Council
Date	13 March 2025
Title	Draft strategic plan
Classification	Unclassified
Summary	At the January meeting of Council, a draft strategic plan was approved for the purposes of consultation with veterinary and veterinary nursing stakeholder organisations, the Public Advisory Group and staff of the College. The Plan attached to this paper includes changes made based on the feedback from this consultation. It also includes revamped introductory sections based on an approach developed by the branding agency, Krowe.
Decisions required	Council is invited to discuss the draft with the aim of signing it off, so that it can be designed, approved by the Officer Team (to which group communications responsibility is delegated), and published.
Attachments	Annex A – draft strategy with tracked changes Annex B – draft strategy without tracked changes
Author	Lizzie Lockett / CEO l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0725

Classifications

Document	Classification ¹	Rationales ²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained	
Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft.'
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation, or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.
²Classification rationales	
Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Draft Strategic Plan 2025-2029

Background

1. The new strategic plan has been formulated based on many discussions with Council, VN Council, committees and staff. It also considers findings from the Surveys of the Professions 2024, the ongoing Competition and Markets Authority investigation, and a survey of RCVS stakeholders' views. There has also been input from RCVS staff, including the Senior Team.
2. A draft was approved at the 16 January 2025 meeting of Council, with some requests for small changes. It was then discussed with our Audit and Risk Committee from the point of view of any risks likely to arise.
3. An updated version has since been sent to a range of stakeholder organisations for their views (veterinary and veterinary nursing associations, government agencies and departments, Veterinary Schools Council etc), as well as the RCVS Public Advisory Group and RCVS staff. Annex A contains a further draft, with tracked changes based on comments made by those who responded. Annex B shows a clean copy, for ease of reading.

The latest draft

4. Although the process of collaboration has altered the format and focus of the plan to quite an extent, it is a good example of 'living the theory' of the plan – better together - and was a worthwhile exercise. We have not consulted on draft plans to this extent before.
5. A key objective in previous drafts was to produce something short and punchy, but during consultation, no one suggested that anything should be taken out. Instead, the general theme was for more and more to be added. Many stakeholders said that they did not have a clear enough view of the context in which the College operated in order to put the future plans into context. An interim draft was therefore longer and more detailed.
6. However, the version you have before you takes a different approach and reverts to something shorter, with the aim of signposting to more information about what the College does on the website. Because the early sections of the document have been quite significantly remodelled, these do not show tracked changes. Tracked changes are included on sections including values, ambitions and aims, where the wording is more likely to significantly impact the outcomes of the plan.
7. These remodelled earlier sections lean heavily on the work of Krowe, our branding agency, which has suggested some clear language for describing how the College works. In turn, this has been developed by the College's Communications Team.
8. Several stakeholders asked for more detail on how work will be delivered. This is not the role of the strategic plan. However, perhaps the plan invited such criticism by sections being framed as 'aims' and 'actions'. Instead, the draft now includes 'ambitions' and 'aims', to make it clearer that actions will be within the operational plans.
9. In line with this change, some of the more specific suggestions, for example, around the Fellowship, veterinary social work, or pet bereavement counselling, have either been taken out or

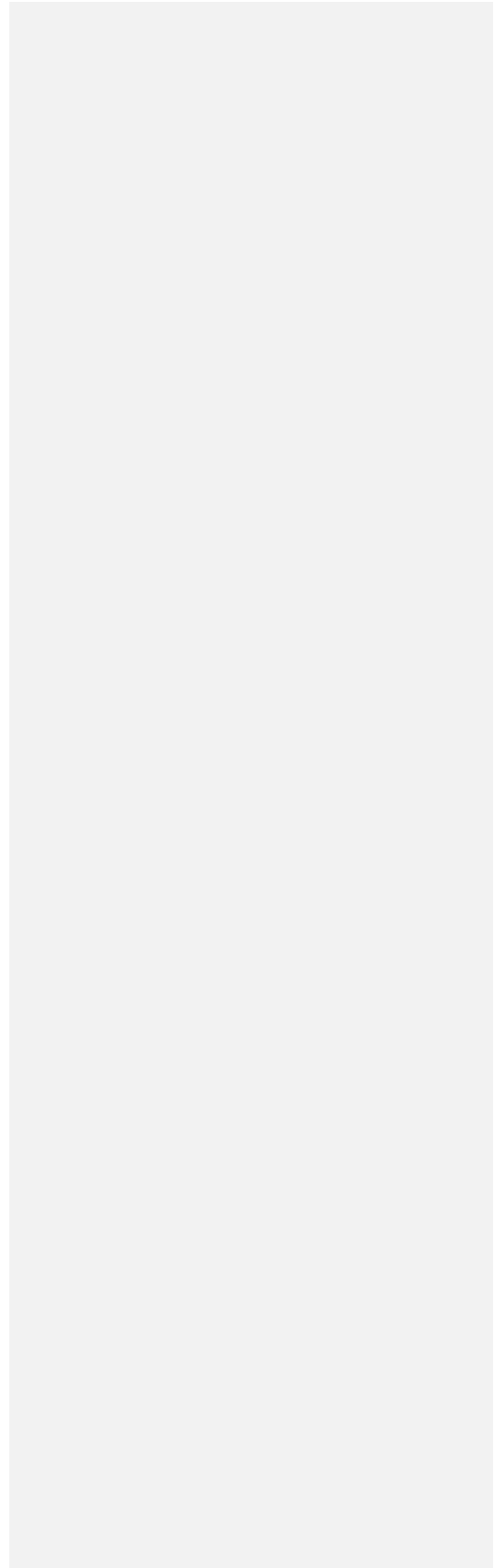
repositioned as examples of possible actions within an 'aim'. (NB many people asked for definitions of 'veterinary social work' or 'One Health'. The plan is not the right place to explain these in detail, instead this will come in the work that flows from the plan.)

10. One comment made several times, in light of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Investigation, was that we should change our heading to 'Stronger together, with animal health and welfare and consumers at our heart'. However, the framing of the plan was to encourage all stakeholders in animal health and welfare, including consumers, to come together to support of strong and effective regulation. So this has not been changed. However, we have strengthened the narrative around the role of consumers within the work of the College and how they will be impacted on, and engage with, our work.
11. At previous discussions, Council was keen that the push for a new veterinary act did not dominate the plan, as it was important for the College to continue to develop and improve without new legislation. It does, nonetheless, include many mentions of new legislation. Several stakeholders did not feel they had a clear enough idea of what the College sought via legislative change, so our detailed proposals will be signposted to from within the plan.
12. The previous draft talked about 'veterinary and allied professions', however a reasonable challenge was made about the fact that we do not yet have any role to regulate allied professions so this was not appropriate. Council's views on this are invited at the meeting.
13. The five-year time frame for the plan was also queried – ie the outcome of the CMA investigation and/or new veterinary legislation may bring about wholesale changes before this time. This has been considered but at this point it is felt reasonable to maintain the original time frame. The ambitions and aims are high level, and changes at 'action' level can be brought out through the operational plans.
14. The final visual format of the plan will be for the Communications Team to advise upon, and will be signed off by the Officer Team – group responsible for communications under the Council Delegation Scheme.

Decision required and next steps

15. Council is invited to review the changes made and to approve the draft so that it can be designed, signed off by Officers and published.
16. At their May meetings, Committees will be asked to consider the development of their one/two-year operational plans to support this work.

[Annex A – Draft RCVS Strategic plan – with tracked changes](#)



Stronger together, with animal health and welfare at our heart

RCVS Strategic Plan 2025 to 2029

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Contents

1. Introduction
2. Who we are
3. Our values
4. About this plan
5. Our strategic ambitions
 - a. Stronger together veterinary professionals
 - b. Stronger together with animal owners and keepers
 - c. Stronger together with society at large
 - d. Stronger together with our staff team and governance

Introduction

Welcome to our new Strategic Plan – stronger together with you

Commented [LL1]: This is an entirely updated section so changes not tracked

As the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), we work to inspire confidence in veterinary care. We protect the public interest by ensuring animal health and welfare, and public health, are advanced through thriving world-class veterinary professions.

Many share an interest in this outcome, and it works best when we bring people together to achieve it.

To that end, the focus of our new strategic plan is 'stronger together' and, on the following pages, we set out what we aim to achieve over the next five years, working with our four key stakeholder groups.

If you are reading this strategy – whether you are a member of the public, a member of the veterinary team, a student, from within an organisation, government, media, or educational establishment, or part of the RCVS team or governance structure – you hold a stake in veterinary standards and animal health and welfare.

So, you have a part to play.

The main purpose of the RCVS is statutory regulation. Alongside our statutory functions, we have an important role in helping vets and vet nurses to be the best that they can be.

This means that, as a Royal College that regulates, we are uniquely placed to bring people together in support of our common purpose in a collaborative, proactive way: producing professionals fit to practise, and professions fit for purpose.

Our collaboration can be small and meaningful, around a particular veterinary standard, or global and existential, such as on important One Health topics that aim to improve the health of people, animals and the environment. Whatever form it takes, it is all valuable and valued.

Thank you to all those who have contributed to the development of this plan. Please continue to help us meet our ambitions, for the benefit of animal health and welfare, and public health.

As our founders put it: *vis unita fortior* – we are stronger together.

[Image of Coat of Arms]

About us

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) is an independent body established by Royal Charter in 1844.

We regulate the veterinary professions in the UK by setting, upholding and advancing veterinary standards, and support veterinary professionals to be the best that they can be.

We work to inspire confidence in veterinary care.

We do this in the public interest. This means we support the needs of consumers of veterinary services, including those who keep, own or rely on animals, and, via public health, society at large.

Although our statutory role is UK-focused, we have a strong global footprint in terms of members working overseas, and international veterinary professionals working in the UK. This gives us international reach, which is important as many of the issues we face – such as diseases, artificial intelligence and societal change – know no borders.

What this means for you

Our mission is to protect the public interest by ensuring animal health and welfare, and public health, are advanced through thriving world-class veterinary professions.

How we get there

Our vision is always to be ambitious and compassionate, working collaboratively to build trust and inspire all veterinary professionals to succeed.

What we do

To fulfil our role, we:

- accredit veterinary and veterinary nursing degree courses and training programmes,
- maintain a register of vets and vet nurses who are qualified to practise,
- set and uphold standards of good professional conduct,
- provide a framework through which vets and vet nurses can develop and thrive,
- help our world-class veterinary professionals be confident in the care they provide, and
- share knowledge, embrace innovation and support better ways of working.

What we don't do

There are some important roles that are the responsibility of other organisations. For example, we do not:

Commented [LL2]: This section has been significantly updated so no tracked changes

Council (13) Mar 25 AI 06d An A

- represent the interests of veterinary professionals,
- insure or legally defend vets and vet nurses, or
- provide animal healthcare advice.

Find out more

You can read more about our role and responsibilities at www.rcvs.org.uk/about

Our values

We have updated our values since our last strategic plan, which now include 'Collaboration' to support our strategic aim of being 'stronger together'.

Importantly, we now thread our previous value of 'Inclusion and diversity' through all of our work in a more integrated fashion, reflecting the way we approach equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Compassion

We will be thoughtful, respectful, listening and understanding. We will [also](#) support our teams, so they have the space, energy and time to respond compassionately.

Collaboration

We will work with stakeholders to ensure the best outcomes and hold space to debate what matters. We will be curious about a diverse range of perspectives and seek to understand all points of view.

Clarity

We will seek simplicity, be clear and consistent. We will be straight-talking, and aim to manage expectations about what is possible, acknowledging that outcomes can't always please everyone.

Courage

For the sake of animal health and welfare, public health and veterinary standards, we will be forward-thinking, act with integrity, boldly seek opportunities for appropriate change, and hold the line where we need to, even when that may be challenging.

Commented [LL3]: Significantly rewritten so no tracked changes

About this plan

True to our strategic aims, this plan has benefitted from extensive collaboration with, and feedback from, our stakeholder groups, and takes into account findings from surveys and discussion groups. [It has been approved by both RCVS and Veterinary Nurses Councils.]

Commented [LL4]: To be added once approved

Structure

Each of the following four sections, focuses on our work with, and anticipated impact on, a different internal or external stakeholder group, namely:

- A. Veterinary ~~and allied~~ professionals
- B. Animal owners and keepers
- C. Society at large
- D. Our staff team and governance

In each section, you will find our [aim-strategic ambitions](#) and some proposed [activitiesaims](#). What we actually do over the next five years will also be informed by changes in the world around us, feedback from stakeholders, our resources and the political landscape.

But regardless of the specific actions, two clear threads will run throughout our work: we do the right thing; and we do things right.

We do the right thing

Animal health and welfare is precious, and the veterinary team are its custodians. Our role is to support them to do the right thing – and in doing so, we must also do the right thing.

We take a leadership role, strive to advance and push for the legal underpinning that we need, [via new legislation](#).

We demonstrate our impact, are risk-informed and relevant. We are fair and expect fairness in return.

We do things right

In order to support this, we must work effectively and efficiently.

We seek a strong evidence base for decisions, bring our stakeholders with us to ensure we can deliver, and be transparent in our process and decision making.

We must ensure we are on a sound financial footing, with appropriate resources and skills. We constantly learn. We prioritise the protection of our data, while sharing our knowledge.

Timeframe

This plan is for a five-year period, ~~alongside which we will develop~~ and will be underpinned by regularly updated operational plans that outline our activities in more detail, with ~~likely~~ timeframes, impact measurements and resource requirements.

Our staff, committees and working groups will ~~input~~ contribute to these plans, to ensure they remain relevant and achievable.

As ever, any major changes emanating from this work will go to consultation with our stakeholders, both professional and public.

~~We will ensure that our~~ Our governance framework ~~for strategic change is~~ will be agile enough to respond to the changing ~~political~~ landscape, for example, the outcome of the Competition and Markets Authority investigation (~~due for final report November 2025~~) and ~~the~~ our ongoing push for new veterinary legislation.

A: Stronger together with veterinary ~~and allied~~ professionals

AimAmbition: we will support veterinary ~~and allied~~ professionals to succeed in meeting high standards in their chosen careers. We will champion accessible, team-based veterinary care, delivered in settings that support professional autonomy and leadership.

Actions ~~Our aimsto meet this~~ will include, but not be limited to:

1. Achieving new veterinary legislation, including team-based veterinary care and practice regulation
- 4-2. Improving the way in which we use data to improve monitoring and enforcement of veterinary standards
- 2-3. Reviewing the Codes of Professional Conduct and supporting guidance, and how they are understood, complied with and enforced
- 3-4. Working, through Mind Matters and other initiatives, to achieve a veterinary workforce that meets demand, and an inclusive culture in which professionals can thrive, without fear of discrimination or harassment
- 4-5. Supporting veterinary professionals' appropriate use of artificial intelligence and other new technologies, to optimise positive impact, support growth and mitigate any risks
- 5-6. Ensuring our educational standards and career pathways meet the diverse needs of society and the professions
- 6-7. Supporting and engaging with veterinary and veterinary nursing students to help them better understand the role of the College and ~~what it is to be a~~ their responsibilities as future veterinary professionals

B: Stronger together with animal owners and keepers

AimAmbition: we will support animal health and welfare [and public health](#) by enabling access to veterinary care that is informed by the needs of consumers and service users.

Our aims ~~Actions to meet this~~ will include, but not be limited to:

1. Achieving new legislation that enables us to better meet the needs of users of veterinary services
2. Forging trust between the veterinary professions, the College and animal owners and keepers, and supporting their needs
3. Supporting [and informing](#) service users [in order](#) to get the best from veterinary professionals, with increased transparency, agency and choice
4. ~~Considering [ways in which those accessing veterinary care could be better supported, by better understanding the human-animal bond and the role of animals in society, for example, the veterinary social work concept to improve access to, and understanding of, veterinary care](#)~~
- 5.4. ~~E~~exploring the role of pet bereavement counselling ~~in as part of our~~ complaint resolution [process](#), [or the veterinary social work concept](#)
- 6.5. Taking regular feedback and working to improve our services and communications to animal owners and keepers

C: Stronger together with society at large

AimAmbition: we will champion the role that veterinary professionals play in One Health and public health, take a leadership role on environmental sustainability and biodiversity, and continue to look beyond our domestic horizons to have a positive impact upon the world around us.

Our aims ~~Actions to meet this~~ will include, but not be limited to:

1. Collaborating and holding space for conversation on challenging issues, such as the role of animals in society, [the responsibilities of animal owners/keepers](#), and the cost of veterinary care
2. Articulating the contribution of veterinary professionals, and interrogating the evolving rights and responsibilities of professionals in today's society
3. Championing the veterinary contribution to One Health, and ensuring the veterinary voice is heard
4. Ensuring ~~that~~ veterinary ~~role~~ [professionals who help to deliver in](#) public health ~~has~~ [are well supported with](#) robust standards and safeguards
5. Lighting a fire of enthusiasm for veterinary work in the minds of the next generation of potential professionals, so we continue to better reflect the society that we serve
6. Building the College's reputation overseas and investigating opportunities to scale and supply relevant initiatives and services, in the interests of animal health and welfare
7. Engaging with the local community around Hardwick Street

D: Stronger together with our staff team and governance

AimAmbition: we will attract and retain the diversity of talent and skills to deliver what's needed now and anticipate what might be next, building a culture that allows people to thrive, whether staff, Council or other contributors to our purpose.

Our aims Actions to meet this will include, but not be limited to:

1. Achieving new legislation that allows for the right skills [and structure](#) for effective governance
2. Developing an infrastructure for success, including our new headquarters, and underpinning structures for finance, communications and digital
3. Planning for success and for succession, including a workplace review
4. [Empowering our staff team confidently to deliver on the College's purpose](#)~~Enabling empowerment and autonomy~~, via competency frameworks and clarity of expectation
5. Creating a working culture with sound values and supportive management, [and enabling and supporting our teams to live up to those values](#)
6. [Actively making diversity, inclusion and belonging a reality, with zero tolerance for harassment and abuse](#)~~Providing a working environment that is inclusive, supportive and respectful, to develops everyone's unique strengths, and with zero tolerance for harassment and abuse~~
- 6-7. Horizon scanning, and bringing the outside in, via research, collaboration and experience
- 7-8. [Taking regular feedback across all of our areas of work to ensure ongoing quality improvement](#)
8. ~~Supporting our Fellowship to have impact~~

Annex B – Draft RCVS Strategic plan – without tracked changes

**Stronger together, with animal health and
welfare at our heart**

RCVS Strategic Plan 2025 to 2029

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Who we are
3. Our values
4. About this plan
5. Our strategic ambitions
 - a. Stronger together veterinary professionals
 - b. Stronger together with animal owners and keepers
 - c. Stronger together with society at large
 - d. Stronger together with our staff team and governance

Introduction

Welcome to our new Strategic Plan – stronger together with you

As the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), we work to inspire confidence in veterinary care. We protect the public interest by ensuring animal health and welfare, and public health, are advanced through thriving world-class veterinary professions.

Many share an interest in this outcome, and it works best when we bring people together to achieve it.

To that end, the focus of our new strategic plan is ‘stronger together’ and, on the following pages, we set out what we aim to achieve over the next five years, working with our four key stakeholder groups.

If you are reading this strategy – whether you are a member of the public, a member of the veterinary team, a student, from within an organisation, government, media, or educational establishment, or part of the RCVS team or governance structure – you hold a stake in veterinary standards and animal health and welfare.

So, you have a part to play.

The main purpose of the RCVS is statutory regulation. Alongside our statutory functions, we have an important role in helping vets and vet nurses to be the best that they can be.

This means that, as a Royal College that regulates, we are uniquely placed to bring people together in support of our common purpose in a collaborative, proactive way: producing professionals fit to practise, and professions fit for purpose.

Our collaboration can be small and meaningful, around a particular veterinary standard, or global and existential, such as on important One Health topics that aim to improve the health of people, animals and the environment. Whatever form it takes, it is all valuable and valued.

Thank you to all those who have contributed to the development of this plan. Please continue to help us meet our ambitions, for the benefit of animal health and welfare, and public health.

As our founders put it: *vis unita fortior* – we are stronger together.

[Image of Coat of Arms]

About us

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) is an independent body established by Royal Charter in 1844.

We regulate the veterinary professions in the UK by setting, upholding and advancing veterinary standards, and support veterinary professionals to be the best that they can be.

We work to inspire confidence in veterinary care.

We do this in the public interest. This means we support the needs of consumers of veterinary services, including those who keep, own or rely on animals, and, via public health, society at large.

Although our statutory role is UK-focused, we have a strong global footprint in terms of members working overseas, and international veterinary professionals working in the UK. This gives us international reach, which is important as many of the issues we face – such as diseases, artificial intelligence and societal change – know no borders.

What this means for you

Our mission is to protect the public interest by ensuring animal health and welfare, and public health, are advanced through thriving world-class veterinary professions.

How we get there

Our vision is always to be ambitious and compassionate, working collaboratively to build trust and inspire all veterinary professionals to succeed.

What we do

To fulfil our role, we:

- accredit veterinary and veterinary nursing degree courses and training programmes,
- maintain a register of vets and vet nurses who are qualified to practise,
- set and uphold standards of good professional conduct,
- provide a framework through which vets and vet nurses can develop and thrive,
- help our world-class veterinary professionals be confident in the care they provide, and
- share knowledge, embrace innovation and support better ways of working.

What we don't do

There are some important roles that are the responsibility of other organisations. For example, we do not:

- represent the interests of veterinary professionals,
- insure or legally defend vets and vet nurses, or
- provide animal healthcare advice.

Find out more

You can read more about our role and responsibilities at www.rcvs.org.uk/about

Our values

We have updated our values since our last strategic plan, which now include 'Collaboration' to support our strategic aim of being 'stronger together'.

Importantly, we now thread our previous value of 'Inclusion and diversity' through all of our work in a more integrated fashion, reflecting the way we approach equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Compassion

We will be thoughtful, respectful, listening and understanding. We will also support our teams, so they have the space, energy and time to respond compassionately.

Collaboration

We will work with stakeholders to ensure the best outcomes and hold space to debate what matters. We will be curious about a diverse range of perspectives and seek to understand all points of view.

Clarity

We will seek simplicity, be clear and consistent. We will be straight-talking, and aim to manage expectations about what is possible, acknowledging that outcomes can't always please everyone.

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For the sake of animal health and welfare, public health and veterinary standards, we will be forward-thinking, act with integrity, boldly seek opportunities for appropriate change, and hold the line where we need to, even when that may be challenging.

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True to our strategic aims, this plan has benefitted from extensive collaboration with, and feedback from, our stakeholder groups, and takes into account findings from surveys and discussion groups. [It has been approved by both RCVS and Veterinary Nurses Councils.]

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Each of the following four sections, focuses on our work with, and anticipated impact on, a different internal or external stakeholder group, namely:

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In each section, you will find our strategic ambitions and some proposed aims. What we actually do over the next five years will also be informed by changes in the world around us, feedback from stakeholders, our resources and the political landscape.

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Timeframe

This plan is for a five-year period and will be underpinned by regularly updated operational plans that outline our activities in more detail, with timeframes, impact measurements and resource requirements.

Our staff, committees and working groups will contribute to these plans, to ensure they remain relevant and achievable.

As ever, any major changes emanating from this work will go to consultation with our stakeholders, both professional and public.

Our framework for strategic change will be agile enough to respond to the changing landscape, for example, the outcome of the Competition and Markets Authority investigation and our ongoing push for new veterinary legislation.

A: Stronger together with veterinary professionals

Ambition: we will support veterinary professionals to succeed in meeting high standards in their chosen careers. We will champion accessible, team-based veterinary care, delivered in settings that support professional autonomy and leadership.

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Ambition: we will support animal health and welfare and public health by enabling access to veterinary care that is informed by the needs of consumers and service users.

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2. Forging trust between the veterinary professions, the College and animal owners and keepers, and supporting their needs
3. Supporting and informing service users in order to get the best from veterinary professionals, with increased transparency, agency and choice
4. Considering ways in which those accessing veterinary care could be better supported, by better understanding the human-animal bond and the role of animals in society, for example, exploring the role of pet bereavement counselling as part of our complaint resolution process, or the veterinary social work concept
5. Taking regular feedback and working to improve our services and communications to animal owners and keepers

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Ambition: we will champion the role that veterinary professionals play in One Health and public health, take a leadership role on environmental sustainability and biodiversity, and continue to look beyond our domestic horizons to have a positive impact upon the world around us.

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7. Horizon scanning, and bringing the outside in, via research, collaboration and experience
8. Taking regular feedback across all of our areas of work to ensure ongoing quality improvement

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	13 March 2025
Title	Preliminary Investigation Committee Report to Council
Summary	This report describes the work of the Preliminary Investigation Committee since RCVS Council's last meeting, including by reference to key stage indicators, and provides information about the nature of concerns being considered by the RCVS.
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Authors	<p>Chris Murdoch Senior Case Manager c.murdoch@rcvs.org.uk</p> <p>Gemma Crossley Head of Professional Conduct g.crossley@rcvs.org.uk</p>

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
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Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Preliminary Investigation Committee

Report to Council March 2025

Introduction

1. This report provides information about the activities of the Preliminary Investigation Committee since the last report (1 March 2025 being the date of writing the report).
2. Since the last Report to Council (which gave information to 3 January 2025), there have been four Stage two Preliminary Investigation Committee (S2PIC) meetings (8 January, 22 January, 5 February and 19 February).

New cases considered by the S2PIC

3. The total number of new cases considered by the S2PIC at the four meetings referred to above is eight. Of the eight new cases considered:
 - Two were concluded at first consideration by the Committee.
 - Six were referred for further investigation, that is, further enquiries, visits and/or preliminary expert reports.
4. One case has been referred to the RCVS Performance Protocol in the reporting period.

Ongoing Investigations

5. The S2PIC is currently investigating 20 ongoing cases where the Committee has requested statements, visits or preliminary expert reports (for example).

Health Protocol

6. There are no veterinary surgeons either under assessment or currently on the RCVS Health Protocol.

Performance Protocol

7. There is one veterinary surgeon currently on the RCVS Performance Protocol.

Professional Conduct Department - Enquiries and concerns

8. Before registering a concern with the RCVS, potential complainants must make an Enquiry (either in writing or by telephone), so that Case Managers can consider with the enquirer whether they should raise a formal concern or whether the matter would be more appropriately dealt with through the Veterinary Client Mediation Service.
9. In the period 4 January 2025 to 1 March 2025:
 - the number of matters registered as Enquiries was 525; and,
 - the number of formal Concerns registered in the same period was 128.

10. The table below shows the categories of matters registered as Concerns between 4 January 2025 and 1 March 2025. At the last Council meeting the categories in use were discussed. It was noted that “veterinary care” is the most commonly used, and a question was raised as to whether this could be broken down into more specific sub-categories (all the categories relating to chapters of the Supporting Guidance to the Code of Conduct). This change is in progress and should be in place by the next Council meeting.

Concerns registered between 4 January 2025 and 1 March 2025

Description of Category	Number of Cases
- Advertising and publicity	1
- Certification	1
- Client confidentiality	0
- Clinical and client records	3
- Clinical governance	0
- Communication and consent	6
- Communication between professional colleagues	1
- Conviction	0
- CPD compliance	1
- Delegation to veterinary nurses	1
- Equine pre-purchase examinations	2
- Euthanasia of animals	2
- Euthanasia of animals – ‘Tuk’s law’	0
- Fair trading requirements	0
- Giving evidence for court	0
- Health case (<i>potential</i>)	0
- Illegal practice	0
- Microchipping	1
- Miscellaneous	3
- Named veterinary surgeons	1
- Practice information, fees & animal insurance	0
- Performance case (<i>potential</i>)	0
- Recognised veterinary practice	0
- Referrals and second opinions	1
- Registration investigation	0
- Restoration application	0
- Social media and networking forums	6
- Treatment of animals by unqualified persons	1
- Use of samples, images, post-mortems and disposal	0
- Veterinary care	87
- Veterinary medicines	5

- Veterinary medicines – application of factors without physical examination	0
- Veterinary medicines – prescribing CDs/antimicrobials without physical examination	0
- Veterinary medicines – ‘under care’ query, other	0
- Veterinary teams and leaders	0
- Whistle-blowing	1
- 24-hour emergency first aid and pain relief	2
- Unassigned	2
Total	128

Data source – Profcon computer system concerns data.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

11. In the period 4 January 2025 to 1 March 2025, the Committee has referred one case involving one veterinary surgeon to the Disciplinary Committee (DC).

Referral to Charter Case Committee

12. In the period 4 January 2025 to 1 March 2025, no cases have been referred to the Charter Case Committee.

Veterinary Investigators

13. The Chief Investigator and Veterinary Investigators have undertaken one unannounced visit with the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) regarding alleged illegal practice and offences under the Veterinary Medicines Regulations (VMRs).

Concerns procedure

14. As Council is aware, the process for the consideration of concerns at Stage one changed at the beginning of October 2022. The median number of weeks in which cases concluded at Stage one can be seen below.

Month in which case concluded	Median number of weeks taken
February 2023	13
March 2023	13.3
April 2023	14.9
May 2023	14.3
June 2023	14.4
July 2023	15
August 2023	15.9
September 2023	13.4
October 2023	12.6
November 2023	18.3
December 2023	11.5
January 2024	16
February 2024	15
March 2024	17.6
April 2024	15
May 2024	12.9

June 2024	19.9
July 2024	11.9
August 2024	15.2
September 2024	13.9
October 2024	12
November 2024	14.4
December 2024	15.9
January 2025	17.4
February 2025	13.4

15. PIC/DC Liaison Committee considered detailed information on the time taken by cases at Stage one at its meeting in November and discussed a new KPI timeframe in light of the data provided and the steps involved in the process. The Liaison Committee concluded that six months was an appropriate timeframe. It also concluded that it would still be helpful to provide median times taken, as this is a good indicator of the most likely duration of matters for those involved in the process.
16. In line with the above KPI, cases that commenced in September and October 2023 have been assessed retrospectively to determine what percentage of them met the six-month KPI. These can be seen below, and we continue to report on this percentage in the future.

17.

Month case started	Cases that met KPI
October 2023	94%
November 2023	87%
December 2023	84%
January 2024	86%
February 2024	93%
March 2024	87%
April 2024	90%
May 2024	85%
June 2024	75%
July 2024	97%
August 2024	91%

18. The Stage 2 KPI is currently for the PIC to reach a decision on simple cases before it within seven months. A case is deemed to be complex where the PIC requests that witness statements and/or expert evidence be obtained. At its meeting in May 2024, PIC/DC Liaison Committee, having undertaken a full review of the Stage 2 KPI, concluded that it was not appropriate to have a KPI for complex cases, in view of the specific complexities of each case. Cases are reported in detail to that Committee, which is able to discuss and monitor performance accordingly.
19. In the period 4 January 2025 to 1 March 2025, the PIC reached a decision (to close, refer to the Charter Case Committee, or refer to DC) within the relevant KPI in one out of two simple cases.

20. Two complex cases were decided. In accordance with the above, these cases (and the work of the department in general) are reported and discussed in detail at the PIC/DC Liaison Committee meeting.

Illegal practice

21. Since the last Report to Council (which gave information to 3 January 2025), three new reports of suspected illegal practice have been received, and which are subject to ongoing enquiries. There is a total of seven ongoing enquiries. These are reported in greater detail to PIC/DC Liaison Committee.

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	13 March 2025
Title	RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee Report to Council
Summary	This report sets out the work of the Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC)
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Authors	<p>Sandra Neary Secretary to the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee s.neary@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0730</p> <p>Gemma Crossley Head of Professional Conduct g.crossley@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0740</p>

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	N/A

¹Classifications explained

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Registered Veterinary Nurses Preliminary Investigation Committee

Report to Council

Introduction

1. Since the last Report to Council, there has been one meeting of the Stage 2 VN PIC, which took place on 28 January 2025. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 11 March 2025.

RVN Concerns received / registered

2. In the period 4 January 2025 and 28 February 2025, there were 12 new Concerns relating to RVNs. Of these 12 new Concerns:
 - 1 case closed at Stage 1 VNPIC.
 - 11 cases are currently under investigation by a Case Manager, Veterinary Nurse, Veterinary surgeon, and a lay member (Stage 1 VNPIC).

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee

3. No new cases have been considered by the Stage 2 VNPIC between 4 January 2025 and 28 February 2025. One ongoing case was referred to the Charter Case Committee.

Ongoing Investigations

4. Seven concerns are currently under investigation by the Stage 2 VN PIC, and these will be returned to the Committee for a decision in due course.

Health Concerns

5. There are currently no RVNs being managed in the context of the RCVS Health Protocol.

Performance Concerns

6. There are currently no RVNs being managed in the context of the RCVS Performance Protocol.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

7. Since the last report, no cases have been referred to the RVN Disciplinary Committee.

Referral to Charter Case Committee

8. Since the last report, one case involving one veterinary nurse has been referred to the Charter Case Committee.

Disciplinary Hearings

9. Since the last report, no disciplinary hearings have taken place in relation to veterinary nurses.



Statutory Membership Examination Guidance 2025

Individuals are advised to read this guidance carefully and to refer to it as necessary at the different stages of the exam process. It describes the exam application process, the format and content of the exam and gives some advice about preparing to sit the exam.

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1. Introduction

Only veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses registered with the RCVS can practise as veterinary surgeons or veterinary nurses in the United Kingdom. The entitlement to be registered as a member of the RCVS is determined by the **Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966**.

If you would like to register to practise in the UK as a veterinary surgeon but your veterinary degree is not recognised by the RCVS, you must pass the RCVS Statutory Membership Examination.

Membership of the RCVS is not a substitute for a work permit or for meeting UK immigration regulations. The RCVS cannot provide advice regarding applications for VISAs, immigration, refugee or asylum status, please contact the Home Office.

This guidance outlines the process of applying to sit the RCVS Statutory Membership Examination. It describes the exam application process, the format and content of the examination and gives some advice about preparing yourself to sit the examination.

You are advised to read this guidance carefully and to refer to it as necessary at the different stages of the exam process

If after reading the guidance, you have questions or require further information, please contact the Examinations Manager on 020 7202 0745 or rcvsexam@rcvs.org.uk. We aim to respond to emails within three working days of their receipt.

1.1. Legislative framework

The Statutory Membership Examination is held under the provisions of Section 6 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, and in accordance with the Regulations made under sub-section (4) of that section. The examination is designed for veterinarians who qualified overseas and who wish to obtain the right to practise in the UK. The examination tests whether a candidate has the knowledge and skills for practising veterinary surgery in the UK. The standard of knowledge and skill required to be shown by candidates to satisfy the examiners in the statutory examination shall be not less than the standard required to qualify as a veterinary surgeon under section 3(1) of the Act.

Success in the examination leads to the right to register and to practise in the UK (subject to visa requirements). Although the UK has now left the European Union (EU) much of the EU legislation still applies in the UK. This means that veterinary surgeons who work in the UK must be aware of both UK and relevant EU legislation as it relates to their veterinary activities in the UK. Candidates should also be aware of any changes in legislation between the devolved regions within the UK.

The new Statutory Instrument (SI) came into place on the 1st of January 2025.

1.2. RCVS Day One Competences

The Statutory Membership Examination is set to the standards outlined in the RCVS Day One Competences. These are the minimum essential competences that the RCVS expects all veterinary students to have met when they graduate. Further information on the Day One Competences can be found in section 6.1.

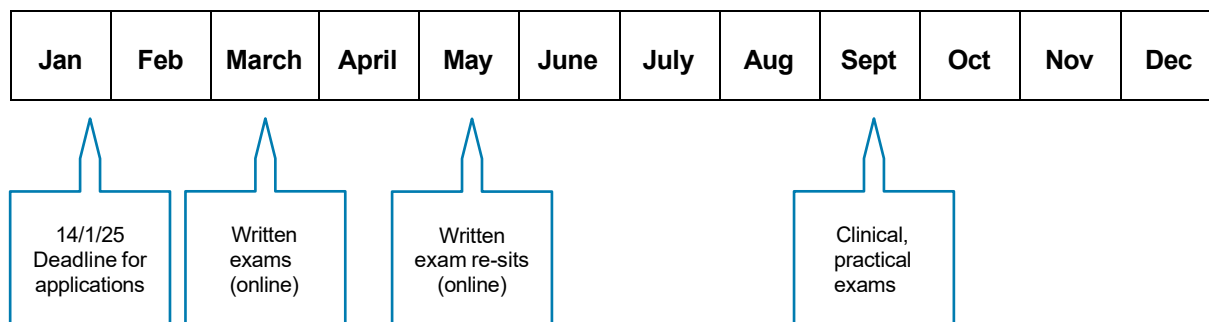
1.3. Format of the Examination

One diet of the Statutory Membership Examination will normally be held each calendar year. An exam 'diet' refers to the period of time in which a particular exam is held, and for which a fee has been paid and the individual accepted as a candidate.

Each examination diet includes the opportunity for re-sits of the individual species domain written exam papers, within a set deadline, when certain conditions are met (refer to section 6.10 for further details).

A candidate must pass all components of the written examination to be eligible to sit the clinical, practical examination. A candidate must then pass all components of the clinical, practical examination in order to be eligible to register as a Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and practise in the UK.

An overview of the schedule for the 2025 exam diet is provided below (timings are approximate).



If a candidate is successful in all the written papers and enters the clinical, practical exam (OSCE), then proceeds to fail one or more components of the OSCE, they may re-enter the exam in the next diet and proceed directly to the OSCE (without needing to sit the written exams again and taking only the OSCE components they failed previously). If they subsequently fail the OSCE for a second time, any future attempts at the statutory membership examination must be started from the beginning, i.e. needing to take both the written and clinical, practical components again.

The new exam rules around re-sits highlighted above apply to candidates entering exam diets from 2025 onwards only. Results from exams taken under previous versions of the rules cannot be carried forward or back.

The Statutory Membership Examination (SME) will cover the underpinning knowledge and understanding, and practical and professional competences required to practise as a veterinary surgeon in the United Kingdom. This includes coverage of veterinary public health, medicine, surgery, and the husbandry associated with companion animals, production animals and horses.

The Statutory Membership Examination consists of the following components:

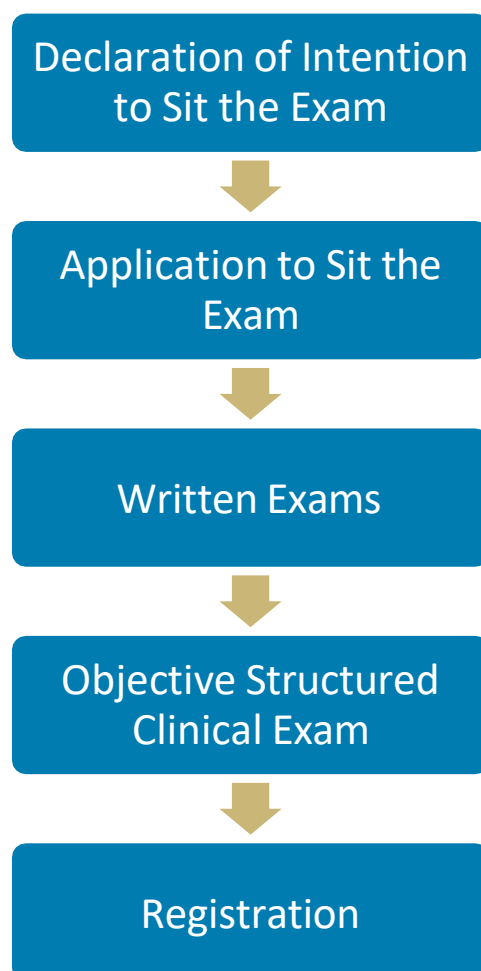
- Written examinations consisting of multiple-choice questions (MCQs) testing the candidate's clinical knowledge across three clinical domains (companion animal, production animal (including veterinary public health) and equine), and their knowledge of the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct.
- A clinical, practical examination comprising an holistic Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) across three clinical domains (companion animal, production animal (including veterinary public health) and equine).

Candidates must pass all the written components before being allowed to proceed to the OSCE.

Further information about the content and format of the examination can be found in sections 6.7 and 6.8.

1.4. Pathway to RCVS membership

There are five stages that potential registrants must complete before they can practise veterinary medicine in the United Kingdom:



These stages are described below:

Stage 1 – Declaration of an ‘Intention to Sit’ the RCVS Statutory Membership Examination.

Individuals must submit a completed ‘*declaration of intention to sit*’ form and provide proof of their veterinary degree, identity, and a completed self-assessment skills list. If they wish to apply for an exemption for the English-language test (see section 2.7) then this is the stage at which to do so. This information will be checked by the Examinations Manager and if our requirements are met, they will be added to our active list of individuals preparing for the examination and be given permission to ‘see practice’. The process is covered in [section 2](#) of this guidance.

Veterinary surgeons, and those applying to be registered as veterinary surgeons, must disclose to the RCVS any cautions or convictions, including absolute and conditional discharges and spent convictions, or adverse findings (including by another regulator or professional disciplinary proceedings) which may affect registration, whether in the UK or overseas (except for minor offences

excluded from disclosure by the RCVS). For more information, please see www.rcvs.org.uk/convictions.

Stage 2 – Application to Sit the Examination

If an individual on the 'intention to sit' active list is eligible to sit the examination, they will be sent the examination application form. This form must be returned to us by the provided deadline date, which is 14 January for the 2025 exam (please note this date may change each year), along with the following:

- examination entry fee of £1,400 (separate fees are required for entry into the OSCE exams and/or resit exams, refer to [section 4.6](#))
- proof of the International English Language Test System (IELTS) or Occupational English Test (OET) score
- letter(s) or Certificate(s) confirming their professional good standing.

The exam application process is covered in detail in [section 4](#) of this guidance. If you wish to request a Reasonable Adjustment (RA) to the exam process due to a disability or particular need (see [section 2.6](#)) please complete the RA form and provide suitable evidence before the exam deadline date.

Stage 3 – Written Examinations

The written examinations will normally be held online, using proctored software and a live invigilation process. You must pass all three clinical domain exam papers (companion animal, production animal (including veterinary public health) and equine) as well as the Code of Professional Conduct paper before you can proceed to the OSCE. See [section 6.7](#) for more information. The dates of the exams may vary each year/examination diet (and may change at short notice). Candidates listed on the intention to sit list will be provided with exam dates prior to the application closing date in January.

Stage 3a: Written examinations

For the 2025 examination diet, the written exam papers are scheduled to take place in March. Results will be issued four weeks after the date of the final exam paper.

Stage 3b: Written examination re-sits

If a candidate fails any component of the written examination, they will be entitled to one re-sit opportunity of those domains, in May, subject to application and payment of the re-sit fee. Results will be issued four weeks after the date of the re-sit examination.

If a candidate does not pass all the components of the written examinations following the re-sit exams, they may not proceed to the OSCE and any future attempts at the Statutory Membership Examination must start from stage one above and encompass the full examination.

Stage 4 – Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)

The final part of the statutory membership examination is the holistic Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). This is a clinical, practical examination and will be held in-person at a veterinary school in the UK. As with the clinical written examinations, you must pass all three domains (companion animal, production animal (including veterinary public health) and equine) to pass the OSCE. See [section 6.8](#) for further information. The dates of the practical exams may vary each year/examination diet, OSCEs are usually held in September.

If a candidate passes the written examinations but then fails one or more components of the OSCE, they are entitled to re-enter the examination the following year and proceed directly to sit the OSCE components which they have failed, without having to re-enter the written examinations. If they fail the OSCE a second time, any further attempt at the statutory membership examination must be a new entry, with the relevant fee, and include both the written exams and OSCE.

Stage 5 – Registration

All examination results will be sent via email 4 weeks after the final part of each section (written examinations or OSCE). Successful candidates will be provided with details on how to register / be admitted for membership. The RCVS usually holds a short ceremony for candidates who have passed the full examination.

1.5. Working as a Veterinary Nurse

All veterinary nurses in the UK must be registered with the RCVS. Veterinary surgeons who do not also hold an appropriate veterinary nursing qualification may not apply for registration as a veterinary nurse. This is because the required competences and skills (and their education and training) have significant differences from those of veterinary surgeons. If an individual wishes to 'see practice' at a UK veterinary surgery, information about how to do so can be found in [section 3.3](#).

2. Declaring an intention to sit the RCVS Statutory Membership Examination

The 'declaration of intention to sit' form can be found on the RCVS website here:

<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/registration/applications-veterinary-surgeons/statutory-membership-exam>. If an individual holds a veterinary degree and intends to sit the RCVS Statutory Membership Examination, they must:

- a. Declare their intention by completing the '*declaration of intention to sit*' form
- b. Provide proof of their primary veterinary degree or diploma (see section 2.1)
- c. If available, provide university issued transcripts of their studies (see section 2.2)
- d. Provide their registration certificate or veterinary licence if they have one (see section 2.3)
- e. Provide proof of their identity (see section 2.4)
- f. Confirm their belief that they have the relevant knowledge and skills by completing the self-assessment skills list (see section 2.5)
- g. Apply for exemption from IELTS/OET, if applicable. **Exemptions must be submitted no later than 1 December of the year preceding the exam** (see section 2.5)
- h. Individuals with a disability or particular need may also wish to complete a reasonable adjustment application, if required (see section 2.6). Please note that this application will not be reviewed until you have requested to enter into the exam.

2.1. Proof of primary veterinary degree

The examination regulations require individuals to provide proof of their primary veterinary qualification (normally a copy of the certificate or diploma received upon graduation from university).

A copy (photocopy or electronic scan) of their veterinary degree certificate and transcripts (with translations if the documents are not written in English) must be included with the completed '*declaration of intention to sit*' form. Original veterinary degree certificates should not be sent in the post, as we cannot be held responsible for any loss.

Original copies of veterinary degree certificates should be kept safe and available in case it is needed for future use. If we need to see an original veterinary degree certificate beforehand, we will contact the individual to make an appointment.

The RCVS normally accepts applications from veterinary surgeons who hold a degree or diploma awarded after at least 5 years of full-time study from institutions listed on the World List of Universities or the AVMA-Listed Veterinary Colleges of the World. Where this is not the case the RCVS may require further information to allow us to establish that the national government in the country which awarded the qualification allows you to practise veterinary medicine in that country.

2.2. Transcripts

If an individual's university has issued transcripts of their studies, these must be sent to the RCVS as part of the declaration of intention to sit the examination. As with the degree certificate, if transcripts are not written in English, then the candidate must provide a professionally translated version alongside a copy of the original.

2.3. Registration certificate or veterinary licence

If an individual is currently, or has at any time in the past, been on a register of persons qualified to practise veterinary surgery in any country or state, details must be provided including the registration

certificate or licence if this has been issued. This must also be professionally translated into English with a copy of the original also provided.

2.4. Proof of identity

Individuals are required to provide a copy of their in-date passport photo page. If their name differs from that on their degree or diploma, they must also send a copy of the relevant legal document linking both names e.g., marriage/divorce certificate. If their name differs between documents for another reason, please contact the Examinations Manager at rcvsexam@rcvs.org.uk for further instruction. Please do not send your original passport in the post, as we cannot be held responsible for any loss if you ignore this instruction.

2.5. Self-assessment skills list

Applicants must complete a self-assessment of their skills and knowledge to demonstrate that they have previously acquired knowledge and experience of the clinical activities featured in the RCVS Day One Competences document [RCVS Day One Competences - Professionals](#). Candidates must meet a minimum required standard in the companion animal, production animal (including veterinary public health) and equine domains to pass the examination. The self-assessment skills list form provides the opportunity for applicants to reflect on the skills they have and make an informed decision about their likelihood of passing the examination. If there are a few areas on the list which need to be covered the applicant should complete an action plan identifying how they will address these areas prior to the examination. This may include undertaking additional training, seeing practice, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) or other suitable activity.

2.6. Candidates with special requirements or requests for reasonable adjustment

If a candidate feels that a reasonable adjustment or special provision is needed in the examination because of a disability or other particular need, they should submit a completed [reasonable adjustment form](#), available on the RCVS website, **as early as possible** in the examination application process. We must be notified no later than the examination entry closing date, otherwise it may not be possible to make the necessary arrangements in time. If a candidate falls ill or experiences unexpected difficult circumstances prior to, or during, the exams, they should use the mitigating circumstances form [Document library - Professionals \(rcvs.org.uk\)](#).

The RCVS will discuss what arrangements can be made, with the candidate, the Chair and members of the Statutory Membership Examination Board, and medical advisers as appropriate. Applications made for medical reasons must be accompanied by a current, official medical letter or certificate and other relevant documentation as outlined in the policy (translated into English).

Assessments for special educational needs must have been made after the candidate's sixteenth birthday.

In some exceptional cases, a candidate may be asked to contribute towards any additional costs incurred to introduce a reasonable adjustment, depending on the circumstances.

If a candidate is pregnant, and their due date is after the OSCE, they must inform us as soon as possible as additional health and safety precautions may have to be arranged.

2.7. English language test exemption

All RCVS registrants must be able to communicate effectively in English at an appropriate level. This can be demonstrated by passing either the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or the Occupational English Test (OET) at the minimum required standard. Further information about these assessments can be found in [section 4.2](#).

If a candidate can demonstrate that their veterinary degree was taught and assessed entirely in English, then they may apply for an exemption from the language test as part of their declaration of intention to sit the RCVS Statutory Membership Examination.

If a candidate wishes to apply for the exemption, this must be done prior to entering into the exam **no later than 1 December the year prior to the exam**. If we do not accept the application to be exempt then this will allow the candidate sufficient time to sit one of the English-language tests.

Candidates must arrange for their university to write a letter to the RCVS to formally confirm that their whole veterinary degree was obtained at an English-speaking University where the whole course was taught and assessed solely in the medium of English. This letter must be written in English and be sent directly from the University to the RCVS at rcvsexam@rcvs.org.uk.

We will consider each application on its individual merit. If a candidate is unable to provide this evidence, they will need to take the IELTS or OET test.

2.8. Translations of documents

If any documents submitted as part of the declaration of intention to sit or examination application are not written in English, an English translation must be provided alongside a photocopy of the original document.

All translations must be made by a professional translator and certified by the translator or a university or regulatory body.

2.9. Recent graduates

If a candidate has recently completed their studies in full and they know that they have passed their degree, but their certificate has not yet been issued, they should contact the Examinations Manager to discuss the likelihood of them being able to enter the examination. Specific information may be required, such as the date that the certificate will be available.

2.10. Refugees

Veterinary surgeons seeking humanitarian protection in the UK can seek financial aid provided by the RCVS to sit the Statutory Membership Exam. Evidence of their in-date humanitarian protection status should be submitted during the 'declaration of intention to sit' stage, along with the other documentation and supporting evidence listed above.

The RCVS recognises that due to their situation, refugee veterinary surgeons may be unable to provide documents required for 'intention to sit'. The Education Department, in conjunction with the SME Board, may be required to exercise their judgment to determine whether a refugee candidate can declare their intention to sit on a case-by-case basis.

Once the necessary supporting evidence has been submitted, the Examinations Manager will request financial support. Financial support offered includes:

- IELTS/OET Exam fee

- Statutory Membership Exam fee

Additionally, the RCVS has arranged the opportunity for refugees and asylum seekers to receive free membership from the following organisations:

- British Cattle Veterinary Association
- British Equine Veterinary Association
- British Small Animal Veterinary Association
- British Veterinary Association
- Pig Veterinary Society
- RCVS Knowledge
- Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons
- Sheep Veterinary Society
- Veterinary Management Group
- VetCT

The Examinations Manager will provide refugees and asylum seekers with a consent form to share necessary details with the above organisations to gain free membership on an annual basis. The organisations retain the right to remove the opportunity of free membership, but the RCVS commends their generosity.

[2.11. Submitting an application](#)

An individual may submit an 'intention to sit' declaration all year round. If the intention is to enter the next examination diet, we must receive completed declarations and supporting documents by **31 December** the previous calendar year otherwise we cannot guarantee that we will have sufficient time to carry out the necessary checks before the examination closing date of 14 January. We recommend starting the declaration process around five months before the exam.

Individuals should aim to **send all the documents together**. Once all the evidence has been submitted a declaration will be reviewed to establish if the individual meets our requirements. A written response will normally be received from us outlining the outcome within three weeks of receiving a completed submission. Please note that if the submission is incomplete or if we must ask for additional documentation, then it may take longer to process the submission. If an individual is eligible to apply to sit the examination, they will be issued with a letter confirming that they may "see practice" in the UK (see section 3.3). They will also be added to our active list of individuals preparing for the examination.

The evidence provided will be kept on file as long as the individual confirms that they are intending to sit the examination. If we believe that an individual is no longer intending to sit the examination (i.e., five years after their last communication) their documents will be archived, and they will be required to submit a fresh declaration and supply their documents again.

[2.12. Renewal of a declaration of intention to sit](#)

Accepted declarations of intention to sit expire on 30 September each year. Once their declaration expires, an individual will be removed from our active list and will no longer be eligible to see practice in the UK. If an initial declaration of intention to sit had been submitted but the individual did not enter the examination yet wishes to do so in the next diet, they should submit a renewal of intention to sit form two weeks before the letter expires. This also applies to candidates who failed the examination but wish to re-enter in the next diet.

Individuals will not be eligible to see practice unless they have an in-date confirmation letter of intention to sit from the RCVS. If an individual wishes to continue to see practice in the UK after the 31 September, they must ensure they submit a renewal of intention to sit in good time to rcvsexam@rcvs.org.uk. Please allow up to four weeks for a renewal of intention to sit to be processed and for a new letter to be generated.

3. Preparing for the examination

Candidates are responsible for preparing themselves to sit the examination. We provide information about the examination to assist candidates in their preparation as well as the following support:

- A suggested reading list in appendix 2 of this document
- An online exam preparation course, which includes a filmed example of a typical OSCE task <https://academy.rcvs.org.uk/>
- Guidance to assist candidates who have entered into the exam to determine whether their hardware is compatible with the software used for online written exams
- There will be an opportunity for candidates who have entered into the exam to familiarise themselves with navigating through an example exam using the software. **Any issues must be raised with the Examinations Manager as soon as possible.**

- Access to a formative written assessment **for candidates who submit a completed exam application and are accepted as a candidate will be provided nearer the time of the exam.** This contains 110 MCQs in the same format and to the same standard as those that will feature in the written examinations. These questions will not be assessed within the final exams but allow an opportunity for candidates to review the style and standard of exam questions while learning how to navigate and use the online exam application. Candidates have three attempts at the formative written assessment.

- A familiarisation session for candidates who pass the written component and proceed to the OSCE. This will feature a wide range of models and equipment typically used in UK veterinary practices. This is an optional session and will not contain any information about the content of the upcoming OSCE exam. This will normally be held on the day before the OSCE.

The examination is set to the standard of the RCVS Day One Competences and the OSCE takes an holistic approach aiming to reflect scenarios typically seen in UK general practice (see section 6). It is therefore recommended that candidates familiarise themselves with the RCVS Day One Competences documents available on our website here: <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/day-one-competences/>.

3.1. Courses of study

The RCVS does not offer or endorse any course of this type and it is up to candidates to decide whether it would be useful to attend a course, or not. Please direct any enquiries to the provider of the course. Please do not contact the OSCE venue to ask questions about the practical exams.

3.2. Studying and access to libraries

Once an individual has met the examination entry requirements and been accepted as a candidate to sit the next examination, they will be able to obtain membership of the RCVS Knowledge Library.

Examination candidates are offered a special library membership category which allows them to access resources. There is a fee of £25 for 6 months' membership. Please contact the RCVS Knowledge Library by email at library@rcvsknowledge.org or telephone +44 20 7202 0752 in advance to arrange an appointment and to let us know the material you would like to use <https://library.rcvstrust.org.uk/>. Membership forms are available from the library on request.

Candidates may also be eligible to apply for a reader's pass to the British Library's science collections. For information about the British Library's admission arrangements please contact them directly or visit their website.

3.3. Practical and clinical experience – Seeing Practice

As well as studying, spending time at UK veterinary practices will help candidates gain valuable practical and clinical experience in preparation for the examination. This is referred to as “seeing practice”. Candidates may see practice under the Veterinary Surgeons (Practice by Students) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 [Seeing practice - Professionals \(rcvs.org.uk\)](https://www.rcvs.org.uk). The regulations described below allow candidates to attend veterinary practices in the UK for the purpose of seeing practice.

Seeing practice in **all domains** (companion animal, equine, production animal and public health) is **strongly encouraged**. All aspects of the examination are set in the context of how consultations and procedures are carried out in the UK. By seeing practice, candidates will experience how vets in the UK work and carry out consultations, which may be different to how they were trained. Candidates may also gain exposure to different species, treatments and diseases that are not common in other regions of the world which will improve their knowledge in preparation for the exam. Additionally, if English is not the candidate's native language it can help improve their communication skills in all formats, which will aid in preparation for the IELTS/OET as well as the exam.

Candidates may not see practice without a valid, in-date letter from the RCVS confirming that they have submitted a completed declaration of intention to sit.

These Regulations permit overseas veterinarians to gain clinical experience in UK veterinary procedures by attendance at a UK veterinary practice for the purpose of entering for the examination. The supervising veterinary surgeon is responsible for what a veterinary student or candidate for this examination does and, therefore, has discretion to decide what procedures they may carry out. The Regulations set out different degrees of supervision for different procedures.

The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 provides, subject to certain exceptions, that only registered members of the RCVS may practise veterinary surgery and the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons states that ‘Veterinary surgeons must ensure that tasks are delegated only to those who have the appropriate competence and registration’.

Exceptions to this rule are described in the Code's supporting guidance under the heading, ‘Treatment of animals by unqualified persons’. The exception at paragraph 19.6 enables a registered vet, at his or her discretion, to supervise a candidate seeing practice in the same way that he or she would supervise a veterinary student as part of their clinical training, and the levels of supervision that apply are described in paragraph 19.7. Both paragraphs are set out below:

19.6 “The Veterinary Surgeons (Practice by Students) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 identify two categories of student, full time undergraduate students in the clinical part of their course and overseas veterinary surgeons whose declared intention is to sit the MRCVS examination within a reasonable time. The Regulations provide that students may examine animals, carry out diagnostic tests under the direction of a registered veterinary surgeon, administer treatment under the supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon and perform surgical operations under the direct and continuous supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon.

19.7 The RCVS has interpreted these as follows:

- (a) *'direction' means that the veterinary surgeon instructs the student as to the tests to be administered but is not necessarily present*
- (b) *'supervision' means that the veterinary surgeon is present on the premises and able to respond to a request for assistance if needed*
- (c) *'direct and continuous supervision' means that the veterinary surgeon is present and giving the student his/her undivided personal attention"*

If a candidate is seeing practice under these Regulations, they must notify the RCVS of their arrangements using a "seeing practice" form and provide updates as appropriate. This form is available on the RCVS website at <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/registration/applications-veterinary-surgeons/statutory-membership-exam/>.

Candidates do not need to gain insurance from providers such as the Veterinary Defence Society to see practice in the UK however they should check that any practice they attend has appropriate insurance cover. Employers/host practices must have Public Liability, Employer's Liability and Professional Indemnity insurance or finances in place to protect the practice, exam candidate and any staff who will be supervising the candidate should a problem occur. This insurance will be valid provided the candidate and staff are not acting outside the legislation described above.

The RCVS cannot help candidates find a veterinary practice or recommend any establishments and so they must make their own arrangements. The RCVS 'Find a Vet' database allows candidates to search for veterinary practices by geographical location and is available on the RCVS website at [Home - Find A Vet \(rcvs.org.uk\)](#)

It is for each candidate to decide where and how much time they need to spend "seeing practice" based on their assessment of their abilities and knowledge of UK veterinary practice. We strongly recommend candidates arrange to spend time at several different veterinary practices and/or one or more of the animal charities to gain practical experience with horses, production and companion animals and veterinary public health.

4. Applying to sit the examination

Application forms will be sent out to all of those on the active list prior to the opening of the application window (normally 1 October). Anyone who submits a declaration/renewal of intention to sit during the application window can request an application form once their declaration/renewal is accepted by the RCVS.

When a candidate submits an application, they must provide the following:

- a. A completed examination application form (see [section 4.1](#))
- b. An English language test report confirming they have achieved the minimum standard (see [section 4.2](#)) or confirmation of their exemption
- c. Evidence (certificate/letter) of their good professional standing (see [section 4.3](#))
- d. A completed reasonable adjustment application, if required (see [section 2.6](#))

If the above is approved, candidates will then be required to:

- e. Pay the examination fee for the written component plus the administration fee (see [section 4.6](#))

Individuals will be accepted as an examination candidate only after we have received and approved all the required items and payment that make up a complete application. Upon completion of all entry requirements, candidates will receive written confirmation from the RCVS that they have been accepted as a candidate to sit the next examination.

In addition to meeting the RCVS examination entry requirements, you may also need to obtain entry clearance from the British Embassy or High Commission in the country you are living in, or a national of, to enter the UK to take the examination. **The RCVS is unable to offer advice regarding your visa status or work permit status. For such advice, please contact the Home Office.**

4.1. Examination application form

The closing date for initial entry to the examination will be provided to all candidates who have registered their intent to sit in advance. The closing date may change but is usually **5pm GMT on 14th January** each year. It is the candidate's responsibility to complete and submit their application in full by the closing date. All applications must be submitted via email to rcvsexam@rcvs.org.uk. Late applications will not be accepted.

4.2. English language test report

Unless a candidate has been granted an exemption, they must provide proof that they meet the minimum required standards in the English language. This can be demonstrated via either of the following assessments (different testing systems cannot be excepted):

International English Language Testing System (IELTS): Achieving an average score of at least **7.0** across the listening, reading, writing, and speaking components of the **academic** version of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). A score of 6.5 is allowed in one component provided the remaining components are 7.0 or more and the overall average is at least 7.0: <https://www.ielts.org/>

Occupational English Test (OET): Achieving at least a **grade B** in the listening, reading, writing and speaking sub-tests of the **veterinary** version of the Occupational English Test (OET). A grade C+ is allowed in one sub-test provided the grades for the remaining sub-tests

are a B or higher: <https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/test-information/healthcare-professions/veterinary-science/>

Once a candidate has achieved the required standard in one of these assessments, they must arrange for the results to be provided to us. This will be a **Test Report Form** if the IELTS was taken, or a **Statement of Results** if the OET was taken. Test results can be sent to us by post or a good quality scanned copy can be provided by email (we cannot accept photocopies). Alternatively, candidate's can arrange for their test centre to send the results directly to us.

Test scores must be in date on all days the candidate intends to sit all examinations i.e., from March through to September / October. Test results are valid for **two years** from the date the test was taken. We do not accept scores from any English tests other than IELTS or OET.

If a pass is achieved in some sub-tests of the OET, or components of the IELTS, but the candidate has fallen below the required standard in others, then they may re-sit those failed sub-tests. Please note that all of the sub-tests/components must be in date for the duration of the examination period.

We will confirm that we have received the test report once we have verified the scores through the IELTS/OET verification service. OET users should ensure that you add the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons to the list of verifier institutions permitted to access their results.

Please contact the test centre for up-to-date result time frames. We strongly advise candidates aim to take the test as far in advance of submitting their application as possible.

4.2.1 English language test validity extension

A passing IELTS/OET certificate / result is valid for two years. Individuals who have achieved a passing score and have continued to live and/or work in an English-speaking country can request their test results validity to be extended by providing a relevant reference from a qualified and registered veterinary surgeon in an English-speaking country. In the UK this person should be a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (MRCVS).

An English-speaking country is defined by the following list: <https://www.gmc-uk.org/registration-and-licensing/join-the-register/before-you-apply/evidence-of-your-knowledge-of-english/using-other-types-of-evidence>.

The reference should be emailed by the veterinary surgeon writing on the candidate's behalf, directly to rcvsexam@rcvs.org.uk and include the following:

- Candidate's name
- The veterinary surgeon's name and registration number
- The address of the veterinary practice
- The dates and amount of time the candidate has spent working with or observing them in practice
- Their assessment of your English skills in writing, reading, listening, and speaking

A reference which is approved by the Examinations Manager will be valid for one year from the date of receipt.

4.3. Evidence of good professional standing

Before an examination entry is accepted, the RCVS must be satisfied that:

- The candidate is of good standing, i.e., that there is no charge of, or ongoing investigation of, crime or unprofessional conduct outstanding against them.
- The candidate is of good character in general terms.
- the information provided by the candidate relates to their most recent period of veterinary employment and registration or student activity.
- The evidence provided is current and up to date. We accept letters dated within the examination entry period (1 October – 14 January). We do not accept letters dated or received outside this time (15 January - 30 September).

Candidates must provide the RCVS with up-to-date evidence of their good standing each time they apply to sit our examination. Letter(s) must be directly emailed to rcvsexam@rcvs.org.uk

4.4 Who may provide evidence of good standing?

We require a letter or certificate from the veterinary licensing authority of the country in which the candidate is currently registered or was last registered. This must be accompanied by a notarised English translation where necessary. It should be noted that in some cases, the RCVS may require additional evidence of good character, especially if the candidate's registration is not current or they have not practised within the last 3 months. If a letter provided on the candidate's behalf does not meet RCVS requirements, we will inform them as soon as possible and the RCVS Registration department will discuss provision of additional suitable documentation with them.

If the candidate has graduated within the last year and has not previously been registered, they should obtain a letter or certificate of good professional standing from the Dean or Principal of the university or college at which they obtained/will obtain their primary veterinary qualification.

The RCVS will not normally accept evidence that is presented by the candidate. However, if their veterinary licensing authority or university cannot provide a letter or certificate written in English, a copy of the letter or certificate may be sent to the candidate, so that they can get it translated. They must then send the original notarised translation to the RCVS. The original copy must still be sent directly from the originator.

It is our experience that some organisations take several months to provide the evidence of good professional standing. Candidates should therefore request the document at the earliest opportunity.

It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the RCVS receives their letter or certificate of good professional standing. **The RCVS is not responsible for chasing up these letters.** If the evidence is not provided by the examination entry closing date, then it is possible that they will not be able to enter the examination.

If the candidate cannot provide a letter as described above, they will have to arrange for the RCVS to receive evidence of their good standing from other sources. An email should be sent to rcvsexam@rcvs.org.uk outlining their query. If necessary, they will be sent a form to complete which will allow the registration team to consider their circumstances and advise them how to meet our requirement.

Veterinary surgeons, and those applying to be registered as veterinary surgeons, must disclose to the RCVS any cautions or convictions, including absolute and conditional discharges and spent convictions, or adverse findings (including by another regulator or professional disciplinary proceedings) which may affect registration, whether in the UK or overseas (except for minor offences

excluded from disclosure by the RCVS). For more information, please see www.rcvs.org.uk/convictions

4.5. Number of examination attempts

Individual candidate examination outcomes (pass and fails) are reported to the RCVS Education Committee. Candidates may attempt the written examination as many times as they wish. If a candidate has failed the clinical, practical examination (OSCE) on three or more occasions, the Education Committee may withdraw that candidate's right to sit the statutory examination. For each attempt, candidates will be required to pay the required examination fee (refer to section 4.6). The RCVS Education Committee may withdraw the right to sit the examination from a candidate. If the committee decides to use their power to do this, that decision will override their rule allowing unlimited attempts at the written examination.

4.6. Examination fees

The examination fees are reviewed on an annual basis.

The examination fees for each component of the 2025 exam must be paid for in full and within the deadlines set below.

Exam component and information	Fee	Deadline date
Initial exam entry fee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Includes one attempt at the full written exams, held in March 2025 	Examination fee of £1,100 plus a £300 administration charge (Total £1400)	14 January 2025
Re-sit written examinations (clinical domains) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only available for candidates if they have taken and failed any clinical domain written exam paper held in March 2025 	Examination fee of £450 plus a £50 administration charge (total £500) per clinical exam domain re-sit	25 April 2025
Re-sit written examination (Code of Professional Conduct exam) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only available for candidates if they have taken and failed the Code of Professional Conduct Exam held in March 2025 	One free re-sit attempt	25 April 2025
OSCE Exam <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only available for candidates to book once they have passed <u>all</u> components of the written exams. 	Examination fee of £1,100	15 July 2025
Entry to sit individual OSCE exam domains in 2026 for candidates who failed the OSCE in 2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Available for candidates if they have taken and failed any component of the OSCE during the September 2025 diet 	Examination fee of £450 plus a £50 administration charge (Total £500) per OSCE exam domain required. If taking entire OSCE, examination fee of £1100 plus a £300 admin charge (£1400)	14 January 2026

Payment is made via the RCVS MyAccount portal. Details are provided once all other aspects of the exam application are complete. Please note, all international bank charges are incurred by the person paying the fee, including those levied by our bank, which is approximately £7.00.

4.7. Withdrawal and refunds

If a candidate wishes to withdraw from the examination, they must notify the RCVS in writing by email to rcvsexam@rcvs.org.uk. Any refund of an examination fee will be made payable to the person who paid the fee. The administration fee will not be refunded.

The size of the refund a candidate is eligible for is dependent on when they choose to withdraw:

Time of Withdrawal	Eligible Refund
Before the relevant exam closing dates, i.e.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March exam entry closing date - 14 January • Re-sit May exam entry closing date – 25 April • OSCE exam entry closing date – 15 July 	The full examination fee, not including the non-refundable administration charge
More than 28 days before the examination	Half the examination fee, not including the non-refundable administration charge
28 days or fewer before the examination	No refund
Failure to attend the examination	No refund

Discretionary refunds on medical or compassionate grounds

If a candidate needs to withdraw from the examination for medical or compassionate reasons, they may be eligible for a discretionary refund of some or the whole examination fee. A request in writing must be submitted with documentary evidence to support the medical or compassionate grounds cited, no later than 28 days after the part of the examination that was missed. Such candidates may have to wait several months for a decision because the RCVS committees that have discretion to grant refunds meet at fixed times during the year and it may not be possible to reach a decision outside the meetings.

4.8. Reapplications following failure or withdrawal

Each time a candidate applies to enter the examination within a new examination diet they must:

- complete a new application form
- pay the appropriate examination fee
- arrange for the RCVS to receive up-to-date evidence of their good professional standing
- meet any other entry requirements.

Candidates will have to sit another academic IELTS or OET test if their previous report is out of date (more than two years old).

5. Admission to the Register

Candidates who pass the whole of the Statutory Membership Examination are eligible for admission to the Register of the RCVS. It is a legal requirement under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 that such individuals register and are admitted to membership of the RCVS before engaging in any type of veterinary work in the UK or using the letters MRCVS after their name.

Some successful candidates will also have to meet UK Home Office immigration criteria to work in the UK and may require a work permit. These requirements are separate from the requirement to be registered with the RCVS. Further information on work permits can be found on the Home Office website. Any queries must be directed to the Home Office.

Candidates must have their passport or identity card with them and their original veterinary degree certificate or diploma when they register. Registration fees must be paid before they attend to register. Full details will be sent with the candidate's examination results.

5.1. Celebratory ceremony

The RCVS may hold a short ceremony for candidates who have passed the examination. Candidates do not need to attend this celebratory event to register with the RCVS. Details of how to register / become a member of the RCVS will be provided with the OSCE results letter.

RCVS registration fees and retention fees are reviewed annually and are increased from 1 April. Please look at the RCVS website for details of current fees <http://www.rcvs.org.uk/about-us/fees/>. If a member does not pay their annual retention fee their name will be removed from the Register, and they will not be able to practise as a veterinary surgeon in the UK.

6. About the examination

This section of the guidance provides information about the scope, standard, format and content of the written examinations and the Objective Structured Clinical Exam (OSCE).

The examination is conducted in English and all communication with candidates, before, during and after the examination' will be conducted in English.

6.1. Exam format

The RCVS Day One Competences are the minimum essential competences that the RCVS expects all veterinary students to have met when they graduate, to ensure that they are safe to practise on day one, in whichever area of the profession they start to work. Veterinarians who qualified overseas are also expected to meet these minimum standards and therefore the examination is designed to provide candidates the opportunity to demonstrate that they meet this minimum standard. You are advised to read the RCVS Day One Competences document carefully and refer to it throughout your exam preparation. The document can be downloaded from the RCVS website.

The clinical written papers and the OSCE are split into three domains: companion animal, production animal (including veterinary public health) and equine. Candidates **must** meet the minimum required standard in each of the three domains and **will not be able to compensate across them**. If a candidate falls below the standard in one domain, **then they will not pass the examination regardless of how well they performed in the other domains**. This applies to both the written and OSCE components of the examination.

The examination will cover the underpinning knowledge and understanding, clinical reasoning, and practical and professional competences required to practise as a veterinary surgeon in the UK including coverage of veterinary public health, medicine, surgery, and the husbandry associated with companion animals, production animals and horses.

Only veterinary surgeons who have submitted an examination application form and supporting documents, paid the relevant examination fee and had their application accepted may attend the examination. Confirmation letters will be sent to those who are accepted as a candidate to sit the exam.

Candidates who pass all of the written exam components will receive confirmation they can progress to the first available OSCE dates at the same time as their written results. The OSCE exam entry fee must then be paid. The location and approximate date(s) on which their OSCE takes place will also be provided at this time. Depending on candidate numbers, candidates may take the OSCEs on different days/weeks.

Candidates **must achieve a pass in all three clinical domains of the written examination as well as the Code of Professional Conduct exam before they can proceed to the OSCE**. All components (written examinations and OSCEs) of the exam must be sat within an 18-month period.

6.2. Exam results and re-sit options (see also appendix 1)

From 2025 onwards, if a candidate fails any of the clinical domain written exam papers held in March, they may choose to re-sit these papers during May the same year, subject to the appropriate examination fee for re-sits being paid. Only one re-sit attempt of each domain is permitted and this must be within the same exam diet. Candidates cannot defer to re-sit a paper in the following diet.

If a candidate passes their re-sit exam(s) in May, and have passed all the written examinations overall, they are entitled to proceed to the OSCE in September, subject to the OSCE exam fee being paid. Due to late entry onto the OSCE exam, this may result in a later OSCE exam date being allocated.

If the candidate fails any of their re-sit written exams, they cannot proceed to the OSCE. If they choose to re-enter the Statutory Membership Examination at a future date, they must submit a new application to take the entire examination as a new candidate.

If a candidate fails the Code of Professional Conduct (COPC) written exam paper in March, they are permitted to re-sit the COPC exam in May 2025 at no additional charge (one re-sit allowed only).

If a candidate passes all the written exams and takes the OSCE, but then fails to pass all domains within the OSCE (Companion Animal, Equine or Production Animal/Veterinary Public Health), they may proceed directly to the OSCE being held in the following diet (without sitting the written exams again) and reattempt the domains they had previously failed, subject to payment of the appropriate examination fee. Such candidates may not defer beyond the next diet, and if they fail the OSCE domains on this second time, any future attempts of the statutory membership exam must be via a new application and include the full examination (written papers and OSCE).

Please also refer to section 6.10 examination Outcomes and re-sit policy for further details

No elements of the examination should be taken without thorough preparation and exposure to seeing practice within the UK, ideally across all clinical domains of practice.

Please also see Appendix 1.

6.3. Examination venues

The written examinations will be administered online, usually over a period of one to three weeks. Normally, each of the clinical domain exams last for approximately 2 hours and the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct exam lasts for 2 hours and 15 minutes. However, candidates should note that times may vary and the duration and schedule for each exam will be confirmed when the exam dates are released. Candidates will be able to take the examination from a secure, appropriate location of their choosing in their own country of residence. Live proctoring and invigilation will be used throughout the exams. Any suspicious behaviour shown during the exam, or an unsuitable environment may prevent candidate's from completing their exam. If a candidate does not set up the examination software application correctly, they may not be able to take their exam. Candidates must inform the RCVS Examinations Manager of the country and time zone in which they will be sitting the exam.

The examinations will be invigilated remotely by a member of the software team by utilising your computer webcam and microphone to observe and take a recording of you during the examination session. The software will lock down the computer for the duration of the examination session: candidate's will not be able to navigate away and access the internet or other files/programs stored on your machine. The hardware requirements can be found at [Information for Exam Candidates | TestReach](#)

Details of the live invigilation process will be provided to candidates prior to taking the exam.

It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that they have the necessary hardware to run the examination software and that it is in full working order (including suitable equipment, good internet, a webcam and microphone) is in full working order. There will be no opportunity to

appeal any components of the examination due to hardware failure. Appeals will only be considered for a verifiable fault with the examination software which was outside the candidate's control. **Touch screen devices (laptops/computers/tablets/iPads) cannot be used, as they are incompatible with the software. Under no circumstances must a device with a Touch screen function be used, even if you do not use the touch screen option and use a mouse or keyboard for example.)**

Devices with Microsoft teams or other messaging software must be uninstalled before commencing an exam.

There will be an opportunity for candidates to determine whether their hardware is potentially compatible prior to the exam. If any issues are encountered during this process candidates must raise this with the Examinations Manager as soon as possible.

The software utilises advanced artificial intelligence and in-person live proctoring to detect potentially suspicious behaviour in the video record, such as eye movements suggesting that a candidate is reading a study aid, use of a mobile phone that could take a screenshot or noises in the room which could suggest a candidate is being fed answers. Any suspicious behaviour suggestive of cheating or incorrectly set up exam app settings may result in the exam being paused or stopped while an investigation is completed by an exam security invigilation member of the software team. This will also be referred to the Examination Board and the Registrar, who will review all reports of the alleged misconduct and consider if there is sufficient evidence for the allegation to be pursued (see section 6.13).

Candidates must conduct themselves during this examination no differently than if it were being held in-person in a regular, invigilated test centre. Candidates must find an environment similar to that of an invigilated test centre or exam room in which to take their exam.

Candidates who pass the written components will proceed to the OSCE. This will take place at a UK veterinary school in Autumn. Candidates are responsible for making their own travel and accommodation arrangements to the OSCE venue.

It should be noted that the examination is designed and delivered by the RCVS and therefore all correspondence should be directed to us. Candidates must not contact the exam software company or the vet school directly (unless instructed to do so by us) as they will not be able to offer assistance.

6.4. Emergency evacuation procedures

If a candidate is required to evacuate the building where they are completing their remote online written examination, they must do so immediately and in accordance with the instructions set out by the building's regulator. They must notify the invigilator and examinations manager about their need to evacuate **as soon as it is safe to do so.**

If, during the practical examinations, a candidate is instructed to evacuate the examination area they must follow instructions provided by the examiner or other test centre personnel. Candidates should leave the examination area in an orderly way, without taking anything with them, or talking to other candidates. They must assemble at the designated area and not leave this area. If they are permitted to return to the examination area, they should do so immediately when instructed. Candidates who are absent once the examination has re-started will not be compensated for any time lost.

6.5. Identification

At the start of each exam day, each candidate will be asked to show their ID (an in-date passport). Candidates may also be asked to present this again to the live invigilators during the written exams.

6.6. Prohibited items

For the written examination, the following items must not be present in the room whilst the examination is in session:

- Any educational, test preparation or study materials
- Electronic devices other than the computer on which the examination will be taken. This includes mobile phones, tablets, hand-held computers, pagers, voice-controlled devices (such as an Alexa for example) and smartwatches. If a device is seen, the exam may be stopped, or the candidate may be asked to show it to the screen and be observed turning this off and placing this in view of the invigilator.
- Bracelets or jewellery which bang or scratch on the table should be removed to prevent any unnecessary noise which could trigger the invigilation software. Exceptions to this can be found in section 6.8.4. A thorough exam security check will take place. Items of clothing with buttons, broaches and pockets will be asked to be presented to the invigilator for exam security checking. Pockets may be asked to be emptied. Items such as jewellery and glasses may also be requested to be shown to the invigilator.
- Stationary, paper, desk clocks and calculators are not needed as they are present within the exam software, and not allowed to be with the candidate at the time of the exam.

A room scan will be completed prior to each written exam. Candidate's will be asked to show the invigilator the walls of the entire room along with the ceiling and floor.

Candidates should complete their exam sat at a table or desk (not sat on a sofa for example). They will be asked to complete a 360-degree scan of the desk/table and chair they are using when taking the exam. Where possible, walls within the room should be free from posters, pictures, shelves etc. If these cannot be removed, candidates may be asked to present these areas to the invigilator.

The exam must be taken in a room with a door that closes, so the candidate is not disturbed. If needed, a 'do not disturb' sign should be put on the door to prevent interruptions.

All types of spectacles / glasses and ear plugs will be required to be presented to the invigilator for exam security checking. Mobile phones, pagers and electronic devices must be turned off and moved to a different room.

Revision notes, textbooks, articles, journals, and study aids must not be present in the room whilst the examination is in session

Candidates are not permitted to take any of the following items into the OSCE station:

- Any educational, test preparation or study materials
- Personal items, including mobile phones, hand-held computers, pagers, smartwatches, or other electronic devices (clocks will be provided where required)
- Bags, purses, wallets

- Coats and outdoor wear not required for the examination
- Bracelets or jewellery which bang or scratch on the table must be removed to prevent disturbance to other candidates. Exceptions to this can be found in section 6.8.4.
- Pencil cases or stationery (these will be provided for you).

A secure space will be provided at the OSCE venue for candidates to store their personal belongings.

6.7. 'Fit to sit' the examination

If a candidate presents at the examination centre (which in the case of the written examination shall be interpreted as logging onto the software), they are indicating that they are fit to sit the examination. If a candidate becomes unwell at any point during the examination, they should inform one of the test administrators or examiners immediately. If they are not fit to sit the exam for any reason, a mitigating circumstances form needs to be completed and submitted to the examinations manager. [Document library - Professionals \(rcvs.org.uk\)](#) Medical evidence may be requested.

6.8. Written examinations

The online written examination consists of 350 multiple-choice questions within three, clinical domains (companion animal, production animal (including veterinary public health) and equine) as well as an open-book examination testing candidate's knowledge of the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct (60 multiple-choice questions). Candidates must pass all these components to be eligible to proceed to the OSCE. The written examination will take place remotely, online, within a period of one to three weeks. The clinical domain exams usually last for approximately 2 hours and the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct exam usually lasts for 2 hours and 15 minutes.

The use of foam ear plugs to decrease noise is allowed. These must be presented to the live invigilator at the start of the exam, these will then be checked to ensure they are not a means of communication (e.g., Bluetooth enabled).

6.8.1 Clinical domain examinations

This examination consists of 350 clinically relevant Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQ) that test both knowledge and clinical reasoning. These will cover three domains:

- Companion animals – approximately 50% of total questions
- Production animals (including veterinary public health) – approximately 30% of total questions
- Equine – approximately 20% of total questions

The questions typically consist of a clinical vignette (a clinical scenario which you might come across in your day-to-day practice), with five answer options. Candidates are required to select the **single best answer**. With this type of question, several of the options are potentially correct but one is a better match to the question than the others by a clear margin.

Candidate's must meet the minimum required standard in each of the three domains. There will be **no compensation across domains** i.e., if a candidate falls below the required standard in one clinical domain, then they will fail the examination regardless of how well they did in either of the other clinical domain examinations.

It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure they allow sufficient time to log into the examination software before the examination is due to start. The formative assessment mock test provides candidates with an idea of how much time is required for this.

All candidates will take the exam at the same time. Times will be presented using the UK time zone. During the exam candidates cannot get up and leave their desk.

Negative marking will not be applied.

6.8.2. Code of Professional Conduct exam

The Code of Professional Conduct MCQ examination is an open-book exam, designed to test candidates' knowledge of – and ability to find information within - the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct, and its application to veterinary scenarios. It will also test knowledge of key organisations and standards relevant to a veterinary surgeon practising in the UK. As with the clinical examination, candidates should ensure that they leave sufficient time to log in before the exam begins.

During this exam, candidates may access a searchable copy of the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct [Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons - Professionals \(rcvs.org.uk\)](https://www.rcvs.org.uk) to assist them. The document is uploaded into the exam software application so that it is easily accessible during the exam. Candidates are still expected to complete this paper under examination conditions and any allegations of misconduct, such as communication between candidates, will be referred to the Examination Board and the Registrar in line with section 6.14 of the guidance.

The length of this examination session is usually 2 hours 15 minutes with no opportunity for toilet breaks.

Candidates are strongly recommend to familiarise themselves with the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct and supporting guidance when preparing for this exam.

Negative marking will not be applied.

6.8.3. Candidate examination conduct (written examinations)

When logging into the software to take the examination, candidates will need their username, password and identification. Mobile phones, pagers, smart watch and electronic devices must be turned off and stored away from the exam room. Revision notes, textbooks, articles, journals, and study aids must not be present in the room whilst the examination is in session.

The exams will be live proctored by a member of the exam software invigilation team. They will ask each candidate to show them (via your laptop/computer camera) a full scan of the room, chair and desk/table. Candidates should ensure the exam is taken in a room that they are comfortable showing the invigilator. Exams cannot be completed if the room scan is not done to the satisfaction of the invigilator. Items such as glasses or any electronic devices seen within the area, will be asked to be shown to the invigilator. The invigilators are trained to detect suspicious items and detect untoward behaviour that many be considered as an exam security threat. Items of clothing with pockets, buttons and broaches, as well as jewellery, will also be inspected, long sleeves will be asked to be rolled up. Candidates should consider carefully what to wear each day for the exam, as this checking process can take time to complete.

It will not be possible to take toilet or rest breaks whilst the examination is in session, therefore candidates should ensure they are comfortable and prepared before the examination session begins.

No other person is permitted to be in the room with a candidate whilst the examination is in session.

Candidates must not leave the room for any reason other than an emergency whilst the examination is in session.

Communication of any kind with anyone else during the examination is strictly forbidden and if this takes place an exam security invigilator will be asked to intervene.

Candidates will have the option to finish the examination early if they desire. Once the exam is finished and answers submitted, the invigilation conditions will be lifted (if appropriate) until the start of the next exam session. Candidates will not be permitted to re-visit their answers once their examination has been completed and submitted.

If candidates experience any problems with the computer or exam content during the examination, they should **alert the live invigilators who will provide support**, and after the exam contact the examination manager immediately. Candidates may be asked to complete a mitigating circumstances form.

6.8.4. Sample exam questions

We have provided a small sample of clinical MCQ questions in Appendix 1 showing the format of questions that will be included in the examination.

There will be an opportunity for each candidate to access (three times) a formative assessment scheduled with 110 MCQ questions to aid your exam preparation (100 clinical MCQs and 10 relating to the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct). These questions reflect the breadth and scope of the questions that candidates can expect to see in the paper and will provide an opportunity for candidates to experience the style of questions contained within the actual examination. If candidates have any concerns after taking this test, they should contact the Examinations Manager as soon as possible at rcvsexam@rcvs.org.uk

6.9. Objective Structured Clinical Examination

The clinical practical examination will be in the form of an holistic Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). OSCEs are a fair, valid, and reliable assessment method; all candidates will be assessed on identical clinical scenarios and practical tasks, asked the same questions, and be scored using a standardised approach.

The OSCE is a multi-station circuit of clinical / professional scenarios that candidates have 15 or 20 minutes to complete. Each station within the OSCE assesses a range of skills, all of which enable candidates to demonstrate RCVS Day One Competences. The stations are designed with a holistic approach to emulate typical consultations seen in UK general practice, for example, the ability to take a history, examine an animal then decide on the next step to be taken and communicate that back to the client. A video recording of a typical holistic OSCE station used in the exam is available here: [RCVS Academy](#) and further information about the course can be found here ['Working in the UK' online courses for veterinary professionals educated outside of the UK - Professionals \(rcvs.org.uk\)](#)

Stations that assess communication skills may include an actor playing the role of the client or other relevant party. Other stations may involve clinical models/simulators, and some may involve the use of cadavers. Some stations may have a live animal and a model and/or cadaver in separate areas. In all cases, candidates will be expected to perform tasks as if they were treating a live animal and should

behave as they would when working in a practice in the UK. These skills will be assessed across companion animal, production animal (including veterinary public health) and equine domains. Candidates must meet the minimum required standard in each of these three domains to pass the examination. There will be **no compensation across domains** i.e., if a candidate falls below the required standard in one domain, then they will fail the examination regardless of how well they did in either of the other domains.

The scenarios that feature in these OSCE stations are based on common and/or important clinical scenarios encountered in veterinary general practice. They will be at the level of the RCVS Day One Competences. These may differ from other countries and therefore candidates should ensure that they are familiar with the methodology they are required to follow.

Examiners will mark each candidate against a standardised scoring rubric. This will describe to the examiners the performance (knowledge, skills, behaviours) candidates need to demonstrate in order for them to achieve the allocated marks. All candidates will be marked against the same scoring rubric.

Each station rubric will assess some or all of the following constructs:

- Animal handling and management
- History taking
- Examination skills
- Diagnosis (clinical judgements)
- Technical skills
- Treatment planning (clinical decision making)
- Communication skills
- Professionalism (including safety)
- Organisation (including time management)

The examiners will record their marks independently. During the examination no examiner knows the marks an individual candidate has scored at any other station (unless they have also assessed that candidate at that station). Feedback on candidates' performance will not be provided.

6.9.1. OSCE Examiners

The examiners are appointed by the RCVS. There will be two independent examiners per OSCE station who will observe candidates during the examination. The examiners will be experienced veterinary surgeons who have received training in the assessment process to ensure that the assessment is fair, valid and reliable.

6.9.2. Candidate examination conduct (OSCE)

The OSCE exam period can typically take between 5 and 7 days to complete. However, this may be liable to change depending on the number of candidates who enter the examination.

Upon arrival at the examination centre, candidates will be shown to a waiting room and their identity will be checked. All candidates will be given a badge that displays their candidate number, and this must be visible for the duration of the OSCE so that the examiners can identify them. Please do not wear a uniform with your name embroidered on to this. Candidates will also receive a briefing about the examination process.

Personal belongings must be placed in the locker or secure area indicated by the test centre staff. Mobile phones, pagers and electronic devices must be turned off before being placed in the secure storage area. Neither the test centre nor the RCVS will be held responsible for lost, stolen or misplaced items. Candidates will not be permitted to take any equipment into the examination (except for the items detailed in section 6.8.4).

Friends, relatives, or children are not allowed to wait in the test centre, nor can they contact candidates during the exam.

The OSCE consists of thirteen stations in separate circuits, such as a clinical skills lab, equine centre, or production animal centre. Examination administrators will ensure that each candidate is at the correct circuit and has plenty of time to change into the correct clothing before the exam start time.

At the allocated start time, candidates will be taken to the examination area where they will be shown to their first OSCE station. At each station, candidates have three minutes to read the station instructions outside the station (reading time may vary, based on candidates with reasonable adjustments). This will include a brief background related to the clinical scenario and instructions for completing the task(s). These instructions contain all the information required for completion of the station so candidates should ensure they take time to read them very carefully. Once the reading time has elapsed, each candidate will enter their station and begin the task(s). A copy of the station instructions will be available inside for reference.

Candidates will have an allocated amount of time to complete each station (normally either 15 or 20 minutes). The time allowed will be stated on the OSCE instructions. **Candidates are responsible for managing their own time in the station.** Each station will include a mechanism by which the candidate can monitor their time for the duration of the scenario, usually a hand-held timer. Some stations may contain more than one practical task. If a candidate is unable to carry out a particular task, they may wish to bypass it and forgo its marks to focus on other tasks within the station. Once the station's time has elapsed, the invigilators will provide instructions to move on to the next station or return to the holding room. Other than as directed in the candidate instructions, candidates should refrain from initiating conversation with the examiners, other candidates or any other personnel present during a station.

Candidates are advised to check carefully that they have completed all the tasks before leaving the station as once they have left, they are not permitted to re-enter. When a candidate has finished each station, they may leave and sit on the chair indicated by the invigilator and wait for further instructions. Candidates are not permitted to communicate with other candidates while waiting.

Scheduled breaks will be provided as appropriate. If candidates need to use the toilet during the OSCE, they should ask the invigilators during the waiting time in the holding rooms. Candidates will not be given additional time to complete the examination if they do take an unscheduled break. When all stations in the circuit have been completed, candidates will be taken back to the waiting area.

6.9.3. Health and safety

Working with animals carries with it an element of risk that candidates are consenting to by entering this examination. In the process of running the examination, the RCVS and the venue will take appropriate steps to mitigate any such risks as far as possible. Neither the RCVS nor the venue may be held responsible for any injuries sustained by a candidate as a result of his/her negligence either

through their actions during the examination or their failure to wear adequate protective gear (see section 6.8.4).

As the examination involves the use of live animals, the examiner may stop a candidate at any time during the examination if it appears that their level of competence is such as to jeopardise the safety and/or welfare of the animal or examination personnel.

6.9.4. Dress code, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and equipment

Candidates are required to follow the dress code outlined in this section. Clothing and footwear are not provided by the RCVS or the examination centre, therefore candidates are required to bring their own. It is important that these have been thoroughly cleaned to prevent cross contamination.

Candidates are expected to bring the following equipment with you:

- Stethoscope
- Fob watch or wristwatch with a second hand for use in clinical examinations of animals (smart watches are prohibited)

For Health & Safety purposes, jewellery including piercings should be removed and hair should be tied back out of the face.

The RCVS recognises there are different religious and cultural beliefs amongst candidates and that candidates may have medical conditions. The RCVS guidance on Religious Clothing and Beliefs can be found [here](#). If a candidate believes these may impact the dress code stated, then please contact the Examination Manager before 31 December.

Clothing requirements for each section of the OSCE are as follows:

Component	Clothing Requirements
Companion Animal	Clean scrubs or a lab coat and suitable footwear (no open toe shoes). Do not wear scrubs with your name embroidered on.
Production Animal and Veterinary Public Health	Clean overalls or boiler suit and clean wellington boots. Waterproofs may be worn if preferred but are not mandatory. After the exam, candidates must carry out a complete hand and boot wash, remove any waterproofs and change into regular shoes.
Equine	Clean overalls or boiler suit and sturdy boots. No waterproofs or wellington boots are allowed in the stables. Protective headgear will be provided by the RCVS.

Candidates should not wear and/or cover up areas of scrubs/overalls/boilers suits that have their name embroidered on to the clothes. Name badges should be removed.

6.10 Examination Outcomes & Appeals

The pass mark for each examination is determined using a recognised standard setting methodology. This evidence-based approach considers the relative difficulty of each of the questions in the exam to determine a fair pass mark in line with the standard expected. Candidates will be notified whether they have achieved the pass mark or not – pass marks will not be published, and feedback will not be available.

The RCVS has an examination appeals policy carried out in accordance with Examination Appeals Procedure agreed by the Council. An appeal may be made only in respect of the conduct of the examination and not against the academic judgment of the examiners. Appeals must be made using an appeal form obtained from the RCVS and submitted to rcvsexam@rcvs.org.uk within 28 days of the date of the letter advising you of the examination result.

A candidate cannot progress to the OSCE without first passing all of the written examinations. Candidates accepted onto the 2025 exam onwards, who fail one or more of the written exams taken in March 2025, have an opportunity to re-sit these papers in May 2025, subject to payment of the appropriate fee (see section 6.2).

On occasions where a candidate appeals the results of their exam, **it cannot be guaranteed that the appeals panel hearing will take place, and an outcome reached, in advance of the OSCE in September.** If an appeal is upheld, it is unlikely that the result will be overturned; the usual outcome is that the candidate is offered the opportunity to take the exam again at the next available sitting (at no charge), which may be the following year.

6.11. Mitigating circumstances

If a candidate feels there are serious mitigating circumstances (such as a sudden onset of illness) affecting their performance at the examination, they must report these to rcvsexam@rcvs.org.uk at the earliest opportunity. If they become ill during the exam session the live invigilators and examination manager must be notified immediately.

If a candidate cannot attend the examination because of serious illness or a different overwhelming problem, they should notify the exams manager that they will not be attending as soon as possible. After the examination, the candidate will be required to complete a mitigating circumstances form providing the circumstances and evidence.

A mitigating circumstances form will be available from the RCVS upon request. Completed forms along with supporting information must be supplied within six days of the examination (written or OSCE). Each application will be considered on an individual basis.

6.12. Confidentiality and exam security

The results of the examination must be an accurate reflection of the candidate's knowledge and skills as a veterinary surgeon. Any cheating or misconduct before, during or after the examination may raise doubts about a candidate's fitness to practise.

All examination material remains the property of the RCVS and candidates are not permitted to reproduce, or attempt to reproduce, examination materials through memorisation or other means.

Candidates must not share information about the questions or cases used in the examination.

They must not provide information relating to the examination content that may give unfair advantage to individuals who may be taking the examination, including, without limitation, posting information regarding the examination content on the internet, on social media or providing it to anyone involved in the preparation of candidates.

If any candidate becomes aware of, or witness, any attempt to compromise the examination, they must report it to the RCVS.

6.13. Misconduct

If any candidate engages in unacceptable or improper behaviour before, during or after the examination to attain success then their results will be annulled, and they may be barred from entry to future examinations.

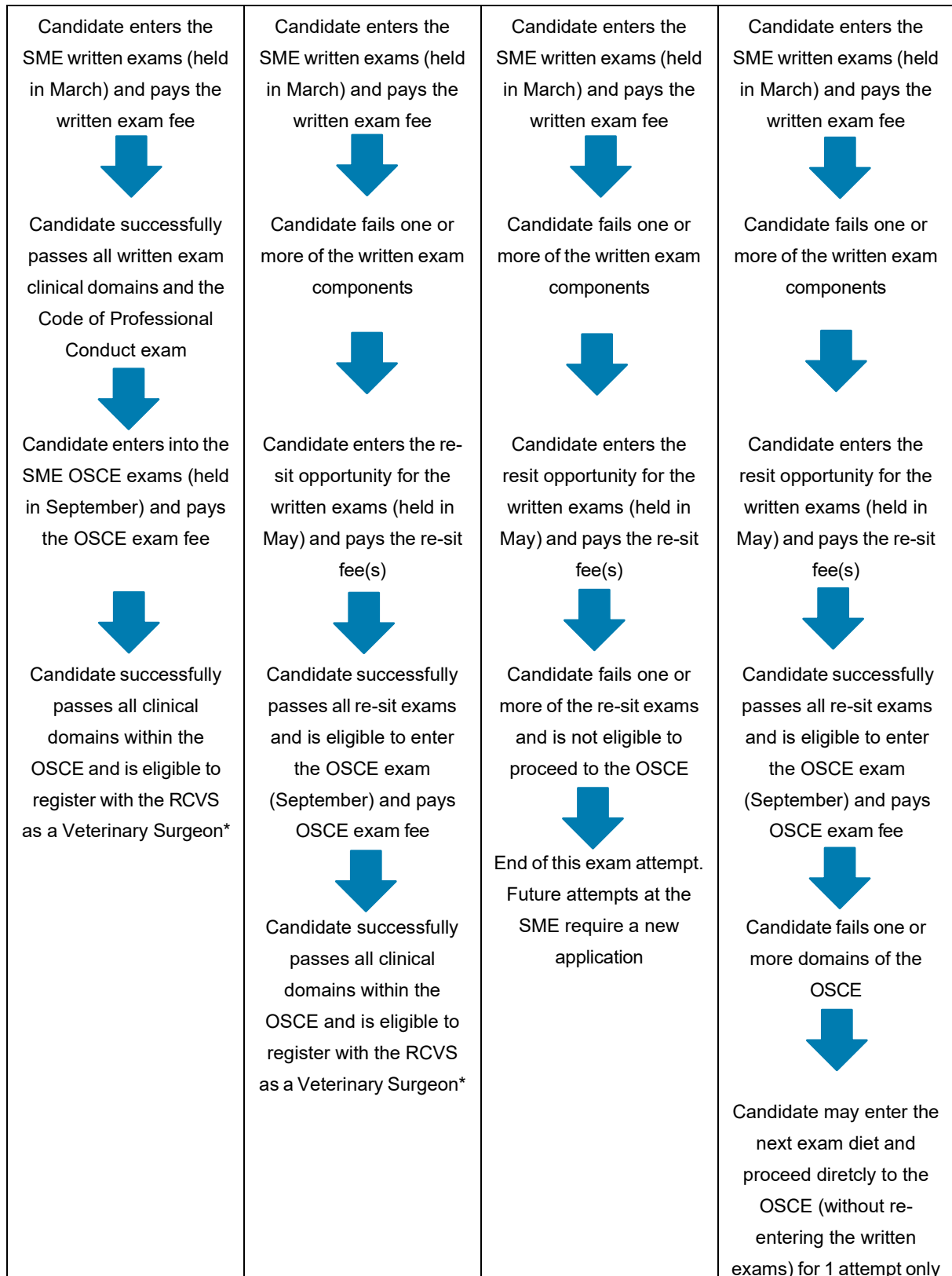
Misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Failure to comply with reasonable instructions given by an examination official.
- Refusal to complete scans of the room or comply with the requests of the invigilator during exam security checks.
- Verbal or physical abuse of any person or animal such that an examiner or member of the examination team is made to feel intimidated or unsafe.
- Disruptive behaviour during the examination or during break times.
- Copying or attempting to copy the work of another candidate.
- Disclosing content from an examination to a third party, either in person or via email or social media.
- Removing examination materials from the examination that they have not previously been authorised to remove. This includes removing materials by using recording devices and taking photographs.
- Bringing items into the examination other than those which candidates have been permitted to use.
- Communication either verbally or via signals with other candidates whilst under examination conditions.
- Impersonation of a candidate or allowing yourself to be impersonated.
- Bribery, or attempted bribery, of any personnel involved in the design, development, delivery of the examination.
- Being part of in-person or virtual groups, who share information that may breach exams and not reporting this.

Allegations of misconduct will be referred to the Examination Board and the Registrar, who will review all reports of the alleged misconduct and consider if there is sufficient evidence for the allegation to be pursued. Candidates accused of misconduct will have the opportunity to provide a defence. We may withhold candidate results while we investigate an allegation of misconduct.

Appendix 1

The flowchart below provides some examples of various routes that a candidate might encounter on their journey through the exam to registration. This includes examples how the exam could be completed via the resit policy.



Appendix 2

Example Clinical MCQ questions

The single best answer is highlighted

1. You are called to see an eight-year-old horse with anorexia, signs of depression and weight loss. Your clinical examination reveals no obvious abnormalities with the exception of poor body condition and icterus of the sclera. In light of the history and clinical findings, what are the most relevant plants or trees to look for in the horse's grazing environment?
 - Alfalfa
 - Foxglove
 - Oak trees
 - Ragwort
 - Yew
2. You are at a routine fertility visit at a dairy farm and are presented with a cow listed as 'oestrus not observed'. On trans-rectal ultrasound the cow has a large thick-walled ovarian cyst. The cow's blood progesterone is raised (5ng/ml). What would be the most appropriate treatment?
 - Insert an intravaginal progesterone device for 10-12 days
 - Manual rupture of the cystic structure
 - Single injection of pregnant mare serum gonadotrophin (PMSG)
 - Single injection of gonadotrophin releasing hormone (GnRH)
 - Single injection of prostaglandin
3. You detect a grade V/VI pansystolic left apical murmur in a ten-year-old Toy Poodle. The heart rate is 140 beats per minute. The owner reports that the dog has recently started coughing at night. What is the most appropriate method of investigation to determine whether treatment for congestive heart failure is required?
 - 2D echocardiography
 - Auscultation
 - Chest radiography
 - Electrocardiography
 - Serum pro-BNP assay

Appendix 3

Suggested reading list (updated Dec 2024)

The reading list is divided into the three clinical domains: companion animal, production animal (including veterinary public health) and equine. This is followed by a general list containing texts that are relevant to more than one species. Websites that give information about current UK legislation of relevance to veterinary surgeons are listed, as well as some recommended veterinary journals and publications. You should read widely and be familiar with current issues and UK-specific problems. The reading list should act as a guide to the depth of knowledge required and should not be considered as a complete summary of the required knowledge.

You are also recommended to review the Day One Competences published by the RCVS [RCVS Day One Competences - Professionals](#) . This sets out the minimum essential competences (comprising knowledge, skills, and attitudes) required to register with the RCVS.

Equine

Auer, J.A. and Stick, J.A. (eds) (2018) *Equine Surgery* 5th ed Philadelphia: Saunders

Baxter, G.M. (ed) (2020) *Adams and Stashaks Lameness in Horses*. 7th ed Oxford: Wiley Blackwell

Knottenbelt, D.C. and Pascoe, R.R. (2014) *The Colour Atlas of Diseases and Disorders of the Horse*. 2nd ed. London: Wolfe.

Mair, T. et al (eds) (2012) *Equine Medicine, Surgery and Reproduction*. 2nd ed London: CRC Press

Munroe, G.A. (ed) (2019) *Equine Clinical Medicine, Surgery and Reproduction*. 2nd ed. London: CRC Pres

Reed, S.M. et al (2017) *Equine Internal Medicine*. 4th ed. Philadelphia: Elsevier. ISBN 9780323443296

Companion animal

Books covering general medicine and surgery:

Fossum, T.W. (ed) (2018) *Small Animal Surgery*. 5th ed. St Louis: Mosby

Johnson, A. and Tobias, K.M. (eds) (2018) *Veterinary Surgery: Small Animal*. Philadelphia: Saunders

Maddison, J. et al (2022) *Clinical Reasoning in Veterinary Practice*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell

Nelson, R. and Couto, C.G. (eds) (2019) *Small Animal Internal Medicine*. 6th ed. St Louis: Elsevier.

Schaer, M., Gaschen, F.P. and Walton, S. (2022) *Clinical Medicine of the Dog and Cat*. 4th ed. London: CRC Press

Books covering more specific disciplines

BSAVA produces a series of books and manuals that provide comprehensive coverage of a wide range of small animal disciplines. The following are some examples that you may find useful. Further information can be found on their website: www.bsava.com.

Arthurs, G. et al (eds) (2018) Manual of Canine and Feline Musculoskeletal Disorders. A Practical Guide to Lameness and Joint Disease. 2nd ed. BSAVA Quedgeley: Gloucester

Bains, S.J. et al (eds) (2012) Manual of Canine and Feline Surgical Principles: a Foundation Manual BSAVA Quedgeley: Gloucester

DeCamp, C.E. et al (eds) (2015) Brinker, Piermattei and Flo's Handbook of small animal orthopaedics and fracture repair. 5th ed. Philadelphia: Saunders

Duke-Novakovski, T., de Vries, M. and Seymour, C. (2016) Manual of Canine and Feline Anaesthesia and Analgesia. 3rd ed. BSAVA Quedgeley: Gloucester

England, G. C. W. and von Heimendahl, A. (eds) (2010) Manual of Canine and Feline Reproduction and Neonatology. 2nd ed. BSAVA Quedgeley: Gloucester

Gould, D. and McLellan, G.J. (2014) Manual of Canine and Feline Ophthalmology. 3rd ed. BSAVA Quedgeley: Gloucester

Harcourt-Brown, F. and Chitty, J. (2013) Manual of Rabbit Surgery, Dentistry and Imaging. BSAVA Quedgeley: Gloucester

Harvey, A. and Tasker, S. (2013) Manual of Feline Practice: a Foundation Manual. BSAVA Quedgeley: Gloucester

Schwarz, T. and Scrivani, P. (eds) (2015) Manual of Canine and Feline Thoracic Imaging. 2nd ed.

BSAVA Quedgeley: Gloucester
Hutchinson, T. and Robinson, K. (2015) Manual of Canine Practice: a Foundation Manual. BSAVA Quedgeley: Gloucester

King, L.G. and Boag, A. (2018) Manual of Canine and Feline Emergency and Critical Care. BSAVA Quedgeley: Gloucester

Meredith, A. and Lord, B. (2014) Manual of Rabbit Medicine. BSAVA Quedgeley: Gloucester

Meredith, A. and Johnson Delaney, C. (2010) Manual of Exotic Pets. 5th ed. Quedgeley: Gloucester

Miller, W.H. et al (2013) Muller and Kirk's small animal dermatology. 7th ed. Missouri: Elsevier Mosby

Platt, S. R. and Olby, N. J. (eds) (2012) Manual of Canine and Feline Neurology. 4th ed. BSAVA Quedgeley: Gloucester

Villiers, E. and Ristić, J. (eds) (2016) Manual of Canine and Feline Clinical Pathology. 3rd ed. BSAVA Quedgeley: Gloucester

Production animals

General

Constable, P.D. (2016) *Veterinary medicine: a textbook of the diseases of cattle, horses, sheep, pigs and goats*.

NADIS Animal Health Skills (subscription required): <https://clinicallibrary.nadis.org.uk/>

Bovine

Ball, P.J. H. and Peters, A.R. (2004) *Reproduction in cattle*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Wiley

Blowey, R.W. and Weaver, A.D. (2011) *A Colour Atlas of Diseases and Disorders of Cattle*. 3rd ed. St Louis: Mosby

Cockcroft, P. (ed) (2015) *Bovine Medicine*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Wiley

Weaver, A.D. et al (eds) (2018) *Bovine Surgery and Lameness*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Wiley

Sheep

Scott, P.R. (2015) *Sheep Medicine*. 2nd ed. London: CRC Press

Winter, A.C. and Clarkson, M.J. (2012) *A Handbook for the Sheep Clinician*. 7th ed. Wallingford: CABI

Pigs

Taylor, D.J. (2013) *Pig Diseases*. 9th ed London: 5M Publishing

Poultry

Greenacre, C.B. and Morishita, T.Y. (eds) (2021) *Backyard Poultry Medicine and Surgery A Guide for Veterinary Practitioners*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell

Sainsbury, D. (2000) *Poultry Health and Managements*. 4th ed. Oxford: Blackwell

Veterinary public health

Mortimore, S. E and Wallace, C. A. (2015) *HACCP: A Food Industry Briefing*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell

Buncic, S. (2006) *Integrated Food Safety and Veterinary Public Health*. Wallingford: CABI

Colville, J. and Berryhill, D. L. (2007) *Handbook of Zoonoses* St Louis: Mosby

Collins, D.S. and Huey, R.J. (2015) *Gracey's Meat Hygiene*. 11th ed. London: Saunders

General reading list

This list contains texts that are relevant to more than one species.

Clarke, K.W., Trim, C.M. and Hall, L.W. (2013) *Veterinary anaesthesia*. 11th ed. London: Saunders

Cockcroft, P.D. (2003) *Handbook of Evidence Based Veterinary Medicine*. Oxford: Wiley

Constable, P.D. et al (2016) Veterinary Medicine. 11th ed. London: Saunders

Gray, C. and Moffet, J (2010) Handbook of Veterinary Communication Skills Oxford: Blackwell

Latimer, K.S. and Robert, D.J. (2011) Duncan and Prasse's Veterinary Laboratory Medicine: Clinical Pathology. 5th ed. Oxford: Wiley

McDonald, P. et al (2022) Animal Nutrition. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson

Noakes, D.E., Parkinson, T.J. and England, G.C.W. (2018) Veterinary Reproduction and Obstetrics. 10th ed. London: Saunders

Otranto, D. and Wall, R. (2024) Veterinary Parasitology. 5th ed. Oxford: Wiley

Zachary, J.F. (ed) (2017) Pathologic Basis of Veterinary Disease St Louis: Mosby

Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) resources

This list contains resources that may provide additional support in preparation for the practical exam:

Bexfield, N. and Riggs, R. (eds) (2024) BSAVA Guide to Procedures in Small Animal Practice. BSAVA Quedgeley: Gloucester

Coombes, N. Silva-Fletcher, A. eds. (2018) Veterinary Clinical Skills Manual. CABI, Wallingford

Bristol Vet School Clinical Skills Booklets: <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/vet-school/research/comparative-clinical/veterinary-education/clinical-skills-booklets/>

[RCVS Day One Competences – Professionals at RCVS Day One Competences - Professionals](#)

Ryane E. Englar. (2021) The Veterinary Workbook of Small Animal Clinical Cases (Veterinary Skills). 5M Books Ltd

Legislation

You should familiarise yourself with UK legislation that may be relevant to veterinary practice in the UK, including the following areas:

- Animal health
- Animal welfare and the health and safety of humans
- Food including milk
- Medicines and residues
- Pet passports
- Slaughterhouses, meat hygiene and meat inspection
- Transport and marketing of animals
- RCVS Code of Professional Conduct at <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-surgeons/>
- The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1996, available on the RCVS website at <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/how-we-work/royal-charter-and-legislation/government-legislation/>

You should always check that any legislation you refer to is the current legislation. You can check by referring to www.legislation.gov.uk which contains up to date information.

The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is the UK government department responsible for policy and regulation on the environment, food, and rural affairs. The website contains information covering food, farming, wildlife, and pets. Website: www.defra.gov.uk

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) is an executive agency of the Defra and works on behalf of the Scottish Government and Welsh Government. Its role is to safeguard animal and plant health. Website: www.apha.gov.uk

The Food Standards Agency – website: www.food.gov.uk

Information about medicines legislation, control of drug usage, good practice and the cascade can be found in the publications section of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate’s website – www.vmd.defra.gov.uk

Animal husbandry

You need to be familiar with the animal husbandry of all species commonly kept as pets in the UK and farmed in British agricultural systems. Books are not listed here. You should seek assistance from a librarian if you have difficulty finding appropriate books. For production animals the following publications are recommended: Livestock Farming, Dairy Farmer, Pig Farming, The Sheep Farmer, Farming UK and Farmers Weekly.

Veterinary publications and journals

You are advised to read the following journals and publications:

- The Veterinary Record
- In Practice
- Journal of Small Animal Practice
- Equine Veterinary Education
- UK Vet
- Publications from the British Equine Veterinary Association – www.beva.org.uk
- Publications from the British Small Animal Veterinary Association – www.bsava.com

Summary of useful websites

RCVS Knowledge Library - <https://knowledge.rcvs.org.uk/library-and-information-services/>

RCVS Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons – available on the RCVS website at www.rcvs.org.uk/vetcode

RCVS Day One Competences – available on the RCVS website at <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/rcvs-day-one-competences-feb-2022/>

www.beva.org.uk – British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA)

www.bsava.com – British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA)

www.bva.co.uk – British Veterinary Association (BVA)

www.bcva.org.uk – British Veterinary Cattle Association (BCVA)

www.cattleparasites.org.uk – Control of Worms Sustainably (COWS)

www.defra.gov.uk – Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

www.apha.gov.uk - The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)

www.food.gov.uk – Food Standards Agency (FSA)

www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/chapter-1-introduction - Food Standards Agency Manual For Official Controls (FSA)

www.legislation.gov.uk – managed by the National Archives, publishes all UK legislation on behalf of His Majesty's government

www.rcvs.org.uk – Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)

www.scops.org.uk – Sustainable Control of Parasites (SCOP)

www.vmd.defra.gov.uk – Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)

www.oie.int – World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH)

Other support which you might be interested in

The **'Working in the UK – Veterinary Surgeons'** provides overseas vets with the necessary information and support needed to practise in the UK and prepare for the SME. Further details can be found online: <https://academy.rcvs.org.uk/>