

## Updated standards now published

*New version includes updates relating to environmental sustainability and academic integrity*



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# Updated standards framework for veterinary nurse training published

**New version includes updates relating to sustainability and academic integrity**

**In September 2024 we released our updated standards framework for veterinary nurse education and training, ensuring that they remain up-to-date and fit for purpose.**

As with other RCVS standards frameworks, we review the *Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training* on a five yearly basis to ensure that approved education institutions (AEIs), delivery sites and training practices (TPs) have the structures in place to best provide contemporary and innovative approaches to education for student veterinary nurses, while being accountable for the local delivery and management of accredited programmes.

The framework sets out the professional values, skills and behaviours required of the AEIs, delivery sites and TPs responsible for providing training and support for veterinary nurses. The new version includes updates relating to sustainability, including the potential impact of delivering veterinary nurse training on the environment, and academic integrity, for example, around assessment and moderation processes.



Julie Dugmore (pictured), our Director of Veterinary Nursing, said: "The Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training last underwent an extensive review in 2019, with a small interim review taking place in 2021.

potential changes, before these changes then went to consultation back in January this year.

"Animal health and welfare and public safety is central to our standards, and it is important that we continue to review them on a regular basis with input from veterinary nurses from across the profession. Nurses play a central role in upholding animal health and welfare and public health, and so it is important that students receive the best training possible in order to prepare them for life in clinical practice.

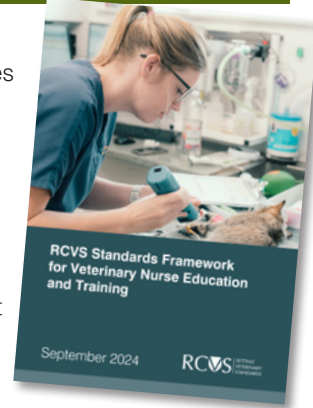
**"Nurses play a central role in upholding animal health and welfare and public health."**

"Over the summer, we held a number of educator meetings to help familiarise AEIs, delivery sites, and TPs with the new framework, in order to make the transition as smooth as possible.

"I would like to thank everyone who attended those sessions and also those who took the time to participate in our consultation earlier in the year. Your insights have played an essential role in informing the new standards."

The new standards came into force on 1 September 2024.

The new *Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training* document can be accessed **via its dedicated webpage** and is also available to **download via the RCVS publications page**.



# Exploring the RCVS Academy

**Discover our newest VN-specific courses**

**Work continues apace with the ongoing development of RCVS Academy courses. Earlier this year a course was launched aimed at external examiners for VN training programmes, intended to support them in their critical review of provision, considering both RCVS and AEI requirements.**

In the April edition of VN Education, an overview of the student veterinary nurse course 'SVN: RCVS & me', was provided. This course was launched in September and is designed to complement the content delivered by the educational teams. The course will provide students with an introduction to the RCVS, and how we can support student veterinary nurses. It focuses on how regulation applies to veterinary professionals, exploring examples of situations where the *Code of Professional Conduct* has been breached. The course aims to reassure students that we are not a regulatory body to be fearful of, but a regulatory body that supports professionals to become competent, confident and independent members of the practice team.

A course detailing the RCVS accreditation processes and providing insight into the

standards and the procedures for quality monitoring is also currently under development. This course will be aimed at RCVS panel members, educators, and AEI personnel as well as employers in training practices. The intention is to offer guidance on our standards and audit processes to all stakeholders involved in VN training. This course will replace the existing VN Standards Handbook, and support accreditation panel member training.

The VN Examinations Team has also updated the 'Working in the UK for veterinary nurses' course, adding a module to support candidates who were educated outside the UK prepare for the multiple choice question (MCQ) element of the pre-registration examination. This course provides applicants with information on the process to be followed when applying to register in the UK, including support with completing both the MCQ and objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) assessments.

Course development is routinely discussed as part of the VN Team strategy. If there are specific courses that you believe would be useful to RVNs or SVNs, please do contact us at [vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk) to discuss this further.



# Vet nursing on the global stage

## Understanding the international landscape



Julie sitting as Chair of the Board. Training for ACOVENE panel members was delivered in July, ahead of two international accreditations scheduled for the autumn. ACOVENE hopes to continue to increase its number of accredited institutions across Europe, increasing work mobility for veterinary nurses with ACOVENE-recognised qualifications and working towards standardisation of the role.

### ESNO

The **European Specialist Nurse Organisation** (ESNO) is also continuing its work relating to standardisation, primarily focusing on human healthcare across Europe, while encompassing all elements of specialist nursing, from oncology to veterinary. We have been a member of ESNO for a number of years, and contributed to the **ESNO Declaration Report** which was presented to the European Commission in October 2023. Julie sits on the ESNO Board and is instrumental in directing the work relating to retention and recognition, using her extensive experience relating to regulation and certification. This year the ESNO congress was held in Milan, where Shirley Gibbins, VN Qualifications Lead, delivered a presentation on quality improvement methodologies to improve patient outcomes. Shirley also moderated several sessions of the congress and has since been invited to join the management board of the **Foundation of Nurse Specialists Europe** (FoNSE), the project arm of ESNO.

### VetEd Symposium

While international work and development is a key part of our strategic objectives, particularly from an advancement and Royal Charter perspective, the regulatory requirements also need to be considered and upheld. Thus, awareness of educational developments forms a significant element of the departmental strategy. It was for this reason that Shirley also attended the VetEd Symposium in Dublin, where a diverse range of international speakers encouraged consideration of recent advances

**O**ver the last 12 months, members of the VN Team have travelled extensively in their quest to develop knowledge and understanding of the international VN landscape, as well as sharing their own experience and expertise with the community. This travel has also included European quality assurance work, and contributing to other regulators' oversight, which works towards the RCVS strategic aim to improve international standards and knowledge sharing.

### ATAV

Julie Dugmore, Director of Veterinary Nursing, was invited to speak at the inaugural International Congress of the Association of Veterinary Auxiliary Technicians (ATAV) in Rimini, Italy. Julie spoke to the 250 attending delegates about the importance of regulation and how it helps to advance the profession, as well as the role of the Accreditation Committee for Veterinary Nurse Education (ACOVENE), a voluntary organisation founded in 2007 to accredit veterinary nurse education programmes in Europe. As an unregulated profession in Italy, the work of ATAV is really helping to drive the profession forward and work towards standardised care and practice.

### ACOVENE

Working across borders to develop standardised care and practice in VN training and education is a core principle for **ACOVENE**, which the RCVS is the secretariat for, with

in learning. Particular highlights included a workshop on inter-professional education and a seminar on supporting development for programme leads, two areas that the VN Team plans to pursue in the future.

### ENQA

Educational considerations are a mandatory element of the regulatory work that the VN team contributes to, and advancement in that area is supported by the work undertaken by, and with, the **European Association for Quality Assurance** (ENQA). We were successfully reaccredited by ENQA last year ensuring that we not only maintain ENQA standards, but actively strive for continual improvement. Shirley attended the ENQA members' forum in Hannover, Germany, where another RCVS colleague, Kirsty Williams, Education Quality Improvement Manager, delivered a presentation on the outcomes-focused approach of veterinary

educational standards. Shirley is also attending the ENQA General Assembly in Malta, to represent the RCVS's views on the ENQA annual review and planned work, such as the budget and board members.



## Practice Standards Scheme five yearly review currently underway

### Proposed Practice Standards Scheme changes to be adopted in 2025

**T**he five-yearly review of the standards in the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) is currently underway, with proposed changes expected to be adopted in 2025.

The purpose of the review is to ensure that the standards remain relevant, streamlined, and easy to understand. Every five years the standards go through rigorous evaluation via several working groups; each focusing on a particular subject area and consulting with external experts, where applicable, in order to make recommendations.

The recommendations will then be considered by both the Practice Standards Group (PSG)

and the Standards Committee, before being brought to Council for final approval.

The current review specifically aims to:

- reduce the number of standards and the process burden for practices;
- have a greater focus on areas of higher risk;
- provide clearer outputs for each standard and award behaviour;
- make the standards less prescriptive and complex and more amendable to more practices; and,
- assess practices in a smarter way.

The review is currently ongoing, and we will keep you updated on any further progress.

# Support packages in review

## Compliance with standards continues to improve

**In the April edition of this publication, an overview of the impact of pre-accreditation support packages we offer to help VN educators prepare for assessments was provided, detailing the improvements seen since these were implemented.**

Now that the academic year 2023/24 has ended, we can illustrate this even further with the outcomes data from accreditations which have

taken place since they were started in September 2023. The data demonstrates that compliance with the standards continues to improve, and AEs are now routinely being awarded full accreditation status for five years by the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee. The provisional accreditation awarded in 2023/24 was for a new programme. The table and graphic below visually demonstrates this trend:

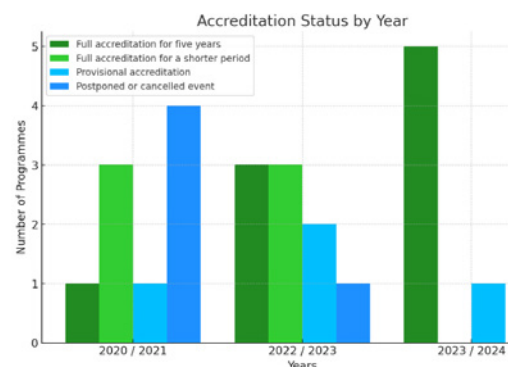
Full accreditation for five years	Full accreditation for a shorter period	Provisional accreditation	Postponed or cancelled event
<b>2020 / 2021</b>			
1 programme	3 programmes	1 programme	4 programmes
<b>2022 / 2023</b>			
3 programmes	3 programmes	2 programmes	1 programme
<b>2023 / 2024</b>			
5 programmes	0 programmes	1 programme	0 programmes

Recent support visits undertaken have included the updated standards, in order to support the development of provision in line with the new expectations. Online meetings have also been held, providing VN educators with an opportunity to discuss the changes and consider how their programmes can best address these.

The coming academic year will see a further change to the make-up of accreditation panels, with Victoria Hedges, our Examinations Quality Lead, now assisting with delivery of the support package, and therefore not attending accreditations as a panel member. The educator representatives for RCVS panels have been trained by Victoria to review and consider the assessment specific elements of accreditation applications. It is hoped that this will improve VN educators' understanding of assessment specific requirements, as well as allowing Victoria an opportunity to offer ongoing support and guidance to AEs.

For the AEs who were visited before Victoria was available to provide guidance, online support sessions have been hosted in order to provide assistance.

We will monitor how this support aids AEs to meet the standards during the accreditation process and during the post-accreditation quality monitoring activity.



# Changes to the pre-registration theory examination

## New updates to examination structure introduced

**In March 2024, five veterinary nurses educated outside the UK sat the newly launched pre-registration multiple-choice question (MCQ) examination. We are pleased to announce that they were all successful and, as they have also passed the pre-registration objective structured clinical examination (OSCE), they have been welcomed to the Register of Veterinary Nurses.**

Following a review of this first sitting of the MCQ examination, Veterinary Nurse Education Committee (VNEC) agreed some changes to the examination structure including splitting paper 2 into two papers. The revision means that paper 2, 'Application of patient care', now contains 65 questions and paper 3, 'Being an accountable professional within veterinary practice', now contains 35 questions. Paper 1, 'Preparing to deliver patient care', containing 100 questions, remains unchanged.

As the majority of questions in paper 3 test knowledge of the RCVS Code of Professional

Conduct (CoPC) for veterinary nurses, VNEC agreed that candidates could have access to an electronic copy of the CoPC to assist with answering the questions. As such, this is now an open book examination. This change means that the scope of questions being asked is much greater, and we will be reasonably assured that successful candidates will have the ability to consult with the CoPC, should they need to, at any point throughout their career in the UK.

To further support candidates sitting this examination the 'Working in the UK for veterinary nurses' course in the RCVS Academy has been revised to add a module to assist candidates preparing for this examination.

Those with any questions about working as a veterinary nurse in the UK or sitting this examination should contact the RCVS Veterinary Nursing Team on [vnoverseas@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:vnoverseas@rcvs.org.uk) or 020 7202 0788.

The pre-registration examination dates for 2024 and 2025 are as follows:

OSCE dates	Closing date for examination entry
9-10 November 2024	Friday 4 October 2024
7-9 February 2025	Friday 3 January 2025
13-15 June 2025	Friday 9 May 2025
8-9 November 2025	Friday 3 October 2025
MCQ Examination Dates	Closing date for examination entry
15 and 20 November 2024	Friday 20 September 2024
25 and 27 March 2025	Friday 31 January 2025
22 and 23 July 2025	Friday 30 May 2025
25 and 27 November 2025	Friday 3 October 2025

# Veterinary Nurses Council Meeting September 2024

## Meeting summary

**On Wednesday 18 September 2024, Veterinary Nurses (VN) Council gathered for its first meeting of the academic year at the Royal College of Nursing, London.**

At the meeting, VN Council Chair Belinda Andrews-Jones (pictured below) welcomed newly elected member Kirsty Young RVN, Head of the Department of Veterinary and Animal Sciences at Scotland's Rural College, as well as newly appointed lay members Lisa Grainger and Jessica Franklin. Zara Kennedy MRCVS was also welcomed to the meeting as the new representative from RCVS Council.

### Update from the CEO

CEO Lizzie Lockett then provided an update, including progress on the current 2020-2024 RCVS Strategic Plan, and stating that work for the creation of the new strategic plan for 2025-2029 was currently underway. Within her update, Lizzie spoke about the 'good

governance' consultation which took place back in June and sought to gain the views of the professions and the public on the proposed new RCVS governance structure. She highlighted that findings from this were due to be reported to RCVS Council in November 2024.

Lizzie also provided an update on the Surveys of the Professions, stating that they were due to be published in October, as well as providing information on the ongoing work surrounding areas such as artificial intelligence, neurodiversity, and the Competition and Markets Authority investigation into the veterinary market.

### Veterinary Nurse Education Committee update

There were also various committee updates provided, including from Susan Howarth, Chair of Veterinary Nurse (VN) Education Committee on the committee's most recent meetings, two of which had taken place since the last VN Council meeting.

In the June meeting, the Committee said goodbye to Sarah Parkhouse RVN, Leigh Willson RVN and Sophia Hoyland RVN, and former VN Council lay member Sarah Fox.

The August meeting saw new committee members welcomed on board, including Donna Cotton RVN (employer representative), Lisa Grainger (VN Council lay member), Helen King (further education independent regulatory expert), Georgina Larkin (student representative in further education), Marie Rippingale REVN (further education veterinary nursing provider), and Gemma Thirkettle (student representative in higher education).

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 15 October 2024.

### Matters for decision

Meeting minutes from both VN Education Committee meetings were approved. There was

also a matter for decision around the terms of reference for the new CPD and Veterinary Graduate Development Programme (VetGDP) Committee structure, and VN Council was asked to approve the terms of reference for the new subcommittees.

Previously, the Committee was made up of two subcommittees:

- CPD Policy and Compliance Subcommittee
- VetGDP Subcommittee

However, the CPD and VetGDP subcommittees were discussing many of the same issues, so it was suggested that there should be one

committee responsible for compliance, and another responsible for policy and engagement. These would be known as the CPD and VetGDP Compliance Subcommittee and the CPD and Vet GDP Engagement Group.

VN Council unanimously approved the terms of reference for these new subcommittees.

The VN Council September meeting papers can be **downloaded via our website**, where more information on the meeting, including VN Education Committee meeting minutes and the new terms of reference for the CPD and VetGDP subcommittees, can be accessed.

## Welcoming back in-person educator forums

### Two meetings held in 2024

**The VN Team has reinstated the educator meetings that were historically held in-person, following calls from educators. Two meetings have been undertaken, one at Harper Adams University and one at SRUC Oatridge. Approximately 65 people attended across the two meetings.**

The intention of these meetings is to provide VN educators with updates relating to our current work, such as the updated **RCVS Standards Framework** and the **VN Vision project**, as well as allowing time to focus on a specific area that educators may require more insight into. The focus for these first two meetings was academic integrity, an area that has been significantly increased within the updated standards, following a seminar that was delivered at the ENQA General Assembly in Dublin last year. The speaker at the ENQA event, Sue Hackett, was hugely knowledgeable and thought provoking,

and thus the VN Team sought her expertise to deliver the presentation to the VN educators. With the ongoing and fast-paced development of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), Sue's key message was for educators to proactively consider their approaches to academic integrity in light of the potential impacts of AI and to be vocal about the proactive developments required in their home institutions, rather than being reactive.

The educator meetings were well received, and the feedback was primarily positive. However, it was also noted that educators wanted more networking time, and an opportunity to review and discuss their own recent contributions to the evidence base. The VN Team is currently considering opportunities to further progress the existing concept of the educator meetings and hopes to deliver an even more constructive and developmental event next year.



# Veterinary Nursing Vision events update

## Continuing to inspire future-focused thinking

**The VN Futures-supported Veterinary Nursing Vision events are continuing to inspire future-focused thinking within the veterinary nursing profession, with nine events now having taken place.**

The event series, which is bringing together veterinary nurses and student veterinary nurses to explore aspirations for the future of the veterinary nursing profession, began with a workshop at VN Council back in February. Since then, veterinary nurses UK-wide from all walks of life have been attending the events and participating in discussions about their visions for the future of the veterinary nursing profession.

There have been seven in-person sessions, taking place at VN Council, VMG Congress, College of Agriculture, Food & Rural Enterprise in Belfast, Veterinary Nurse Education Committee, Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), Harper Adams University, and Coleg Gwent. There has also been an open online session as well as an online educator-specific session.

Jill Macdonald, VN Futures Project Lead, said: "The aim of the VN Vision workshops is to gain the views of, and input from, veterinary nurses and students with a broad range of perspectives and experiences about what they would like to see in the future for veterinary nursing. In the sessions we focus the discussions on areas



such as education and training, the structure and delivery of care, what veterinary nurses can do, and practice culture.

"The VN Futures project was first formed eight years ago now, and a lot has changed within the profession and the entire sector within that time. We are therefore keen to make sure that the project remains current and forward-looking, and it is important that nurses at all stages of their careers have the opportunity to get involved in creating a vision for the future."

***"The aim of the VN Vision workshops is to gain the views of, and input from, veterinary nurses and students with a broad range of perspectives and experiences about what they would like to see in the future for veterinary nursing."***

Julie Dugmore, RCVS Director of Veterinary Nursing, added: "So far, all the events have been very well received, and it is hugely promising to see how positive, enthusiastic, and open to thinking outside of the box the attendees have been.

"The discussions have been fruitful and varied, but there are definitely some common themes emerging. These are namely the need for improved training and utilisation of patient care assistants; the development of advanced practitioner and prescriber roles; and, increased team cohesion, empowerment, and support, including improved recognition for all members of the veterinary team.

"We are going to be holding more events throughout the rest of the year, including at the hub at BVNA Congress 2024, so do keep an eye out for these. I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in attending and

supporting the sessions so far and look forward to welcoming many more of you to the workshops throughout the remainder of the year."

The next VN Vision events, open to all veterinary nurses and student veterinary nurses are as follows:

- **Wednesday 2 October, 6:15 – 9:30pm, in-person, Hello Vet, London**
- **Saturday 12 October and Sunday 13 October, in-person, BVNA Congress (the Hub)**
- **Tuesday 15 October, 6:30 – 8:30pm, online**

There will also be an event specifically aimed at veterinary nurses and vet nursing students working in the equine sector:

- **Wednesday 23 October, 6:15 – 9:30pm, Bottle Green Training, Derby**



Details of all VN Vision events, including information on how to sign up, will be housed on our dedicated **VN Vision events collection page**, as and when each of the events goes live.

The outcomes from the events will culminate in a report outlining the themes of the discussions and next steps.

To receive updates on the events, please ensure your email updates from VN Futures are accepted in your RCVS 'My Account'.

The **VN Futures website** will also provide further information on upcoming events as and when they are made live.

## Interested in attending a VN Vision event but not sure what to expect?

When asked about which aspect of the VN Vision session they found most valuable, here's what some of our attendees had to say...

***"The entire evening was very enjoyable. It was an open and honest discussion that everyone participated in which was refreshing."***

***"Brilliant evening, exceeded my expectations. I felt heard and valued as an RVN."***

***"To hear the opinions of others in the profession and know that we are all thinking similarly. A very valid point made on mental health in the VN Profession, that by utilisation of nursing teams appropriately, it would increase job satisfaction and therefore help with mental health."***

***"This was an excellent opportunity for the voices of veterinary nurses to be heard."***

***"Feeling like RVNs are being taken seriously. Finally, hopefully we will have a structure for further certification and be allowed to work to our full potential."***

***"Discussing topics with a range of RVNs to hear a range of opinions."***

***"Realising that as a collective we all have very similar ideas and visions, which is very positive for the future of the profession."***

***"Listening to like-minded nurses with the same vision as myself."***

***"All of it. It was good to know many people in the nursing profession, or involved in it, would like the same things to happen."***

# Veterinary Nursing Vision project goes stateside

VN Futures-supported event to take place in Anaheim

The VN Futures-supported VN Vision events are going stateside, as RCVS Head of Veterinary Nursing, Julie Dugmore, and VN Futures Project Lead, Jill Macdonald, travel to Anaheim, California, in November, to host a session at the North American Veterinary Community's (NAVC) Vet Nurse and Teach HiVE event.



"We also want to share some of the findings so far from our work on this project with US nurses. There are several recurring themes and threads which run through [all the stuff we've found out so far], and it will be fascinating to see whether US nurses have the same ambitions; and potentially gain some ideas that, being from a very different cohort, will throw something completely new into the mix."

The event runs from Saturday 23 to Sunday 24 November 2024.

For more information visit: [navc.com/hive/vet-nursetech-hive-anaheim/](https://navc.com/hive/vet-nursetech-hive-anaheim/)

The session will be a very similar format to the current UK events, with an additional session entitled 'The Past, Present, and Future of Veterinary Nursing', also being held.

Jill said: "I've often heard it said that the UK vet nursing profession should attempt to collaborate more with US veterinary nurses and technicians, and this event presents a great opportunity to listen to nurses from another continent's aspirations for the future, and the similarities and differences that may exist in how we all see our profession evolving.

# First step for development of neurodivergent student support guidelines

A summary of the RCVS stakeholder event

On Friday 14 June 2024, we held a hybrid event at The Royal College of Surgeons, London, to help inform our work on creating guidelines to support neurodivergent students on veterinary nursing and veterinary placements.

Delegates comprised neurodivergent veterinary nursing and veterinary students, key stakeholders in veterinary education, including lecturers,

disability liaison officers, placement officers and student welfare support staff, as well as extra-mural study (EMS), intramural rotation (IMR) and student veterinary nursing (SVN) placement providers.

The event was organised through a collaboration between the RCVS Veterinary Nursing, Advancement of the Professions, and Education teams. It was built upon research by Dr Kirstie



Pickles MRCVS and Dr Brad Hill MRCVS, funded by the RCVS Mind Matters Initiative in 2019, on workplace stressors faced by autistic veterinary professionals in practice, as well as further research conducted by Dr Pickles, and Director of Equine Services at the University of Cambridge, Professor Anna Hollis.

***"This event represented a crucial step forward in our collective efforts to ensure that neurodivergent students receive the support they need to excel in their studies and beyond."***

The day featured a mix of talks and group discussions with speakers Kirstie, Anna, and Angharad Belcher, RCVS Director for the Advancement of the Professions, heading up the event. It began with an overview of the day from Kirstie, Anna, and Angharad, before delegates were split off into discussion groups, where they were asked to discuss a range of questions based around three key themes:

- 1) How do we set up placements to be successful?
- 2) How can we support students with frequent change of rotation placements?
- 3) What are the types of adjustments that could be put in place?

The day ended with a brief round-up of the discussions, which was facilitated by Kirstie and Anna, and delegates were given the opportunity to ask any outstanding questions.

Angharad said: "This event represented a crucial step forward in our collective efforts to ensure that neurodivergent students receive the support they need to excel in their studies and beyond.

"For many the workplace can be a challenging environment to join, let alone when considering neurodivergent needs. Our hope is that, by laying out clear guidance, it will empower students to make the most of their time on placement, but also have a ripple effect within workplaces and organisations to consider their approach and focus on the benefits that each individual can bring, in turn impacting recruitment and retention within the workforce."

The event received positive feedback from delegates, and we are currently working on the next steps to develop guidelines for good practice in supporting the wellbeing and academic success of neurodivergent students in veterinary nursing and veterinary education.

If there are any case studies or policies in relation to neurodiversity that you would like to share, please email the Advancement of the Professions Team on [advancement@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:advancement@rcvs.org.uk).

## In conversation with RCVS Veterinary Nursing Golden Jubilee Award winner 2024

### Introducing Andrea Jeffery RVN

**O**n Friday 5 July 2024, we held our annual Royal College Day – our Annual General Meeting and awards ceremony – in central London at the Royal Institute of British Architects.

At the event, we had the opportunity to speak with this year's RCVS Veterinary Nursing Golden Jubilee Award winner, Andrea Jeffery RVN, about her work and achievement.

The Veterinary Nursing Golden Jubilee Award was introduced in 2011 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first veterinary nurse training course. The award is aimed at veterinary nurses who have had a sustained and distinguished career, who can demonstrate a leadership role within the profession and who can act as an ambassador for the value of veterinary nurses and their work.

This year's recipient, Andrea Jeffery RVN (pictured), is an educationalist, VN pioneer and former Chair of our Veterinary Nurses Council. She was the first veterinary nurse to chair the RCVS VN Council as well as being the first to sit as a member of RCVS Council, representing the University of Bristol Veterinary School.

As VN Council Chair, Andrea oversaw the creation of the first Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses. In 2007, along with fellow former VN Council member Hilary Orpet RVN, Andrea developed the 'Orpet and



Jeffery Ability Model', the first model of veterinary nursing care which helped to provide a standardised approach to veterinary care. Latterly, Andrea worked as Chief Nursing Officer for Linnaeus with responsibility for more than 2,000 nursing staff.

Here's what Andrea had to say after receiving her award...

#### How do you feel about receiving the award?

*Honestly, I feel really honoured and privileged to have received it. There are a lot of people who have supported and mentored me throughout my career and helped me to get where I am now. It's a challenging time at the moment for those in the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions, but I think that the impact of some of the things that I've been able to support in achieving since I joined the profession 30 years ago – such as our Code, the professionalisation of veterinary nursing, the standard of education, and the diversity in the skill set that veterinary nurses now have – is huge. So, we will overcome the challenges we currently face, and our profession will continue to thrive.*

*I would like to thank Trish Scorer for nominating me, and Liz Cox for supporting the nomination, as well as my family and friends.*

#### What would you say to other members of the profession to encourage them to consider nominating a colleague for an award?

*I think it's really important to consider nominating your colleagues for an award. The diversity of our professions and the contributions that people make in all areas of both veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing really needs to be recognised. This is a formal way of doing that and thanking people. It's wonderful. I've been around a long time, and it is truly an honour to receive this award. I think we should recognise and celebrate the amazing work that vets and nurses do in their chosen career paths.*

## Welcoming our newest Cert AVN panel member

### Introducing Heather Blair RVN (PG CertAEVN; BSc (Hons); FdSc)

**N**ew CertAVN panel member Heather Blair RVN, shares with us why she decided to apply to become a panel member, what she hopes to get out of the experience, and how she hopes to inspire other VNs to continue on their educational journeys.

After gaining my postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Equine Veterinary Nursing in June 2024, I applied to be a CertAVN panel member. I was later contacted by the RCVS notifying me of my success in the position.

**“For me, as a student who has now achieved the postgraduate certificate, the opportunity to sit on this panel opened many areas of potential interest.”**

Prior to my application, I had a discussion with my employer (Rainbow Equine Hospital) about the relevance and motivation for why I wanted to be a student representative on this panel. For me, as a student who has now achieved the postgraduate certificate, the opportunity to sit on this panel opened many areas of potential interest. I was unsure if I wanted to do further education again alongside continued development of my practical skills in a new job. The postgraduate certificate was the first further education qualification that I had completed since graduating as an RVN in November 2014.

Firstly, interacting with someone who has experienced the study requirements of a postgraduate course could be hugely important and supportive for future students, as it can bring an informative insight as to how valuable the course can be, or discuss areas of improvement or development.

Secondly, this allows me to create new contacts and develop existing ones within the veterinary

education environment, which is continually growing. I think that it is important to realise that education and learning in the veterinary nursing profession does not just stop when you become an RVN, and there are huge opportunities out there to continue education and learning in something specialised and unique.

Too few RVNs take on the opportunity to do this, as they are worried or nervous about continuing study for a range of reasons. With the correct support, however, I think that it can allow us to expand our knowledge and give us confidence to have clinical discussions within the wider veterinary team, improve our competence and capability of nursing our patients, and the interaction and support of our colleagues at an advanced level.

So far, I am the only veterinary nurse that has gained a postgraduate certificate in my practice. I hope that by being part of a panel, and helping expand other syllabuses to cater to all VNs, it will give my team the confidence to develop their education in the areas of nursing that they are predominately interested in. Finally, by representing the panel, I am also able to represent my practice with pride.





# Celebrating Veterinary Nurses Day

## New VNs to be welcomed to the profession at Bristol Beacon

**We are delighted to announce that our next Veterinary Nurses Day will be taking place on Tuesday, 10 December 2024 at the Bristol Beacon, with two ceremonies taking place during the day.**

The day will celebrate the achievements of those who have recently joined the RCVS Register, as well as those who have completed an advanced qualification in veterinary nursing.

Eligible nurses will be sent an invitation by email. This includes newly-registered VNs who have completed the Level 3 Diploma, VNs who have completed an advanced qualification in veterinary nursing, and those who have completed an overseas qualification and have now registered as a veterinary nurse in the UK.

For more information, [visit the VN Day webpage.](#)



## Veterinary Nursing Department Personnel

### Director of Veterinary Nursing:

Julie Dugmore RVN – 020 7202 0775

### Administration Manager:

Annette Amato – 020 7202 0713

### Examinations Quality Lead:

Victoria Hedges RVN – 020 7202 0782

### Qualifications Lead:

Shirley Gibbins RVN – 020 7050 5046

### Qualifications Assessor:

Tori Thornton RVN – 020 7050 1243

### Qualifications Assessor:

Jasmine Curtis RVN – 020 7050 1229

### Senior Qualifications Officer:

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### Qualifications Officer:

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Jill Macdonald RVN – 020 8148 5549

### Examinations Assessor:

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### Examinations Administrator:

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