

Pathway No: FR05014
Issue No: **Issue Date:** 01/03/2021
Review by Date:
Last Updated: 22/02/2021
Issuing Authority: Welsh Government



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

0207 Welsh Apprenticeship Pathway

in

Veterinary Nursing

The content of these Pathways has been agreed by Lantra. These are the only apprenticeship Pathways in the Agriculture & Environment sector approved for use in Wales that are eligible for Welsh Government funding.

More Information can be obtained from:

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DfES-ApprenticeshipUnit@gov.wales
Gwefan • website: www.llyw.cymru
www.gov.wales

Contents

[Learning Programme Content](#)

[Duration](#)

[Entry Requirements](#)

[Apprenticeship Pathway Learning Programme\(s\)](#)

- [Level 3: Veterinary Nursing](#)
 - [Small and Companion Animal](#)
 - [Equine](#)

[Other Additional Requirements](#)

[Job Roles](#)

[Progression](#)

[Equality and Diversity](#)

[Employment Responsibilities and Rights](#)

[Responsibilities](#)

[Annex 1](#)

[Annex 2](#)

LEARNING PROGRAMME CONTENT

The Learning Programme provision shall comprise of three mandatory elements:

- Qualifications,
- Essential Skills
- On/off the job training

The total minimum credit value required for the **Level 3 Pathway Veterinary Nursing** (including qualifications and Essential Skills) is:

- **Small and Companion Animal: 313 credits**
- **Equine: 313 credits**

DURATION

Level 3:

Up to 36 months (flex.)

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Level 3: Veterinary Nursing

Awarding Organisations set the entry requirements for the qualifications within the programme. The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) approves the requirements as part of the accreditation process. Due to the industry being highly regulated, entry requirements for the Veterinary Nursing Apprenticeship are:

- 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C (or 9-4). Subjects must include English Language, Mathematics and a Science subject plus 2 other GCSEs.
Where an entrant does not have such qualifications, entrants may have alternative qualifications that are demonstrably equivalent.

The purpose of minimum entry qualifications is to ensure that potential apprentices are in a position to:

- Cope with the level and scope of learning required to achieve the registrable qualifications in veterinary nursing
and
- Function effectively and safely as a student veterinary nurse in a veterinary practice.

Some possible alternative qualifications which may be acceptable are:

- Level 2 Diploma for Work-based Animal Nursing Assistants
- Level 2 Diploma for Veterinary Nursing Assistants
- Level 2 Certificate for Animal Nursing Assistants
- Level 2 Diploma for Veterinary Care Assistants
- Level 2 Diploma in Work-based Animal Care

These qualifications are deemed acceptable as entry qualifications because they also incorporate significant work-based experience, directly relevant to veterinary nurse training. However, these qualifications are acceptable only when accompanied by Essential, Functional or Key Skills at level 2 in Application of Number and Communication or the relevant GCSEs.

Additionally, for: Veterinary Nursing - Equine

All students must be able to achieve the RCVS Day One Competences and Skills for Veterinary nurses. There may be some physical restrictions in parts of the veterinary nursing role, especially while working with and handling animals. This should not rule anyone out, as there may be opportunities for people with a physical disability to work elsewhere in the industry. Training providers and employers are required to ensure that unfair discrimination does not occur.

APPRENTICESHIP PATHWAY LEARNING PROGRAMME(S)

Level 3: Veterinary Nursing

Qualifications

Participants must achieve **one of the following combined qualifications** below.

Small and Companion Animal

Combined

CQ Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing - Small Animal Practice					
Awarding Body	Qualification No.	Credit Value	Total Qualification Time (TQT)	Combined / Competence / Knowledge	Qualification Assessment Language(s)
Central Qualifications	603/2318/8	299	2990	Combined	English only

Please see [Annex 1](#) for the relationship between the competence and knowledge units within the combined qualification.

Equine

Combined

CQ Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing - Equine Practice					
Awarding Body	Qualification No.	Credit Value	Total Qualification Time (TQT)	Combined / Competence / Knowledge	Qualification Assessment Language(s)
Central Qualifications	603/2317/6	299	2990	Combined	English only

Please see [Annex 2](#) for the relationship between the competence and knowledge units within the combined qualification.

Essential Skills Wales (ESW)

Level 3: Veterinary Nursing - Small and Companion Animal - Equine	Level	Minimum Credit Value
Communication	2	7
Application of Number	2	7

Industry groups have decided to not include Digital Skills (ESW) as mandatory element into this programme, as the training programme within the Veterinary Nursing Apprenticeship already addresses digital skills at a significant level.

WEST (Wales Essential Skills Toolkit) is compulsory and training providers may be able to create their own sector specific questions using guidance provided by Welsh Government.

<https://www.tribalgroupp.com/software-and-services/student-information-systems/wales-essential-skills-toolkit>

On/Off the Job Training

As the duration of the Apprenticeship is flexible (up to 36 months), the total amount of learning hours, which includes both on and off the job training, will also vary. Based on annual full-time working hours, this will be 1615 hours for 12 months, for any other duration pro rata.

Suitable mix / flexible - recommended as minimum at around 20% off the job. Depending on duration of apprenticeship, this will be 323 hours per year off the job training.

These hours may vary depending on previous experience and attainment of the apprentice, and the time taken to complete the apprenticeship programme.

Pathway	Minimum On the Job Training Hours	Minimum Off the Job Training Hours
Level 3: Veterinary Nursing - Small and Companion Animal - Equine	Based on annual full-time working hours 1292 per year	20% recommended, based on annual full-time working hours: 323 hours per year

All apprentices must meet the current RCVS Veterinary Nurse Registration Rules, the **RCVS minimum requirements** can be found on the RCVS website.

On/Off the Job Qualification details (Minimum Credit & Hours)

299 credits/2990 hours TQT for CQ Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing - Small Animal Practice **or** CQ Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing - Equine Practice

On/Off the Job Essential Skills details (Minimum Credit & Hours)

7 credits/70 hours TQT for Level 2 Essential Skills Wales Communication
7 credits/70 hours TQT for Level 2 Essential Skills Wales Application of Number

OTHER ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Level 3: Veterinary Nursing

Learners should be encouraged to take additional courses, such as certificates in:

- Emergency First Aid (one-day course approved by Health & Safety Executive HSE)
- Mental Health First Aid

JOB ROLES

Level 3: Veterinary Nursing

Job roles at Level 3 (Apprenticeship) may include:

Veterinary Nurse	The majority of Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs) work within a veterinary surgery or veterinary hospital and are involved in a wide range of care and treatment of animals. RVNs are responsible for providing expert nursing care for sick animals as well as undertaking minor surgery, monitoring anaesthesia, medical treatments and diagnostic tests under veterinary direction. RVNs may work in general practices/primary care practices, referral hospitals or zoos. Other fields of work may include veterinary pharmaceuticals, pet insurance industry, research or teaching or lecturing.
Veterinary Nurse (Equine)	Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs) specialised in Equine provide expert care, support and treatment to horses under veterinary direction. RVNs (Equine) are responsible for providing expert nursing care for sick horses as well as undertaking minor surgery, monitoring anaesthesia, medical treatments and diagnostic tests under veterinary direction. They also play a key role in promoting animal health and welfare through the support and education of veterinary clients.
Veterinary Nurse (Rehabilitation)	The work of Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs) specialised in rehabilitation may include hydrotherapy and physiotherapy for animals.
Head Veterinary Nurse	Supervises a team of veterinary nurses and/or nursing assistants and support staff within a veterinary practice. This job role may be covered under other job titles, too.
Veterinary Practice Manager	Many opportunities exist within practice for those who have good management and leadership skills. The ability to plan, problem solve and communicate are important attributes in this role. Veterinary Practice Managers ensure that daily operations run smoothly in the clinic, allowing veterinarians to focus solely on practicing medicine rather than the many details of running a business.

A number of regularly changing job titles are being used for different roles within veterinary nursing. Further information and case studies can be found on www.vnfutures.org.uk

PROGRESSION

Level 3: Veterinary Nursing

Apprentices successfully completing the Apprenticeship have opportunities to progress within the industry by progressing to Higher Education courses such as HNC/D, Foundation Degree or Degree (BSc). There are other professional development opportunities for those not wishing to follow the degree progression route.

Examples for progression through Further or Higher Education courses may include:

- Veterinary Science
- Animal Behaviour
- Equine Veterinary Nursing / Small and Companion Animal Veterinary Nursing (depending on pathway completed)
- Anaesthesia certificates
- Human Nursing
- Teaching qualifications
- Advanced diplomas
- Business Management / Management & Leadership
- RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing
- Other appropriate specialism training, such as animal rehabilitation (hydrotherapy, physiotherapy etc.)

For apprentices who wish to continue their development of skills and qualifications beyond degree level, opportunities exist to progress further in Higher Education with courses such as a Master's Degree, which could include:

- Veterinary Epidemiology and Public Health by Distance Learning
- Veterinary Science
- Clinical Veterinary Science
- Advanced Practice in Veterinary Nursing

Some useful websites to visit regarding Higher Education are www.ucas.co.uk or <https://www.prospects.ac.uk> - both of these have information about courses and providers along with specific information on entry requirements.

For further information on continuous professional development please look at the RCVS website www.rcvs.org.uk

Apprentices looking to progress in their employment from the Apprenticeship may be able to find supervisory or managerial positions. Other options include specialising further or taking positions in other areas of the animal care industry such as animal welfare or training.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

It is important that apprenticeship Pathways are inclusive and can demonstrate an active approach to identifying and removing barriers to entry and progression. Pathways should advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those persons who do not as identified in the Equality Act 2010.

The Protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act are age, disability, gender re-assignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership is also included although only in respect of the requirement to eliminate discrimination in employment.

Training providers and employers MUST also comply with the other duty under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that applicants are not discriminated against in terms of entry to the industry based upon those nine protected characteristics.

Veterinary Nursing industry

Despite a slight increase of male employees within the Veterinary Nursing industry from 2% (2010) to 2.7% (2019), an overwhelming majority of 96.8% of respondents of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons' (RCVS) 2019 Survey of the Veterinary Nurse Profession (RCVS) were female employees, which is still significantly higher than the percentage of female employees of the UK labour market (47%), as well as the sector average for Wales at 46%. It is suggested that this is because of a lack of awareness and due to the perception that the Veterinary Nursing profession is for females.

Research shows a small increase in Black Asian and Minority Ethnic employees, from 1.1% (2008) to 1.9% (2019). On average, Black Asian and Minority Ethnic respondents are younger than White respondents, therefore, it is suggested this trend may continue. There has been an increase in the proportion of respondents with a disability/medical condition that limits what they can do at work; from 3.9% (2014) to 7.4% (2019). The majority of Veterinary Nurses were employed full-time.

There are wide range of hands-on roles for people of all ages and abilities together with an increasing need for skilled managerial, high-tech and specialist people.

Veterinary nurses work alongside veterinary surgeons to provide a high standard of medical and nursing care for animals. They are trained to a high level to enable them to work in all aspects of the veterinary practice environment from reception to the operating theatre. When qualified there are opportunities for more specialised training, for example in equine veterinary nursing, treating wildlife casualties, pet nutrition and surgical nursing. Experienced veterinary nurses have the opportunity to become head nurses and practice managers, work in specialist referral centres, teach in agricultural colleges and universities and work in pharmaceutical and veterinary supplies industries.

There may be some physical restrictions in parts of the veterinary nursing role, especially while working with and handling animals. Details are outlined in the RCVS Fitness to Practise policy. This should not rule anyone out, as there may be opportunities for people with a physical disability to work elsewhere in the industry.

Training providers and employers are required to ensure that unfair discrimination does not occur.

Apprenticeships are seen as a vital route to encourage and facilitate a greater diversity of individuals into the industry.

Resolutions and further work

Lantra, the Veterinary Nursing Industry and RCVS work to increase equality and diversity amongst Veterinary Nurses by:
Marketing and communications, highlighting the opportunities to a wide range of careers and target groups. This takes into account the need to increase diversity within the industry.

The industry also feels, the current culture within veterinary practices fosters further interest and clearly values the Veterinary Nursing roles, which is seen as vital support for career events, opening up more opportunities for anyone interested.

EMPLOYMENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS (ERR)

Employment Responsibilities and Rights (ERR) is no longer compulsory. But it is recommended that all apprentices (especially the 16-18 year group) receive a company induction programme.

ERR should be carried out during induction, revisited briefly on a routine basis, and recorded.

RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of the Training Provider / Employer to ensure that the requirements of this Pathway are delivered in accordance with the Welsh Government Apprenticeships Guidance.

Further information may be obtained from:

Welsh Government
DfES-ApprenticeshipUnit@gov.wales

ANNEX 1

Relationship between competence and knowledge qualifications

Level 3 – Pathway: Small and Companion Animal

There is one qualification, which includes both, competence and knowledge:

Central Qualifications Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing – Small Animal Practice

603/2318/8 Central Qualifications 299 credits 2990 hours TQT 1290 GLH

The competence and knowledge elements will be achieved through completion of the mandatory units listed within the awarding organisation's (Central Qualifications) guidance and will total 299 credits.

The units will be assessed by assignments, theory examinations, Central Skills Log portfolio and the OSCE. All units are mandatory.

Knowledge units

- VNSA1 - Operational requirements in small animal practice (9 out of 11 credits knowledge)
- VNSA2 - Professional relationships and communication in small animal practice (7 out of 9 credits knowledge)
- VNSA3 - Small animal functional anatomy and physiology for veterinary nurses (29 out of 29 credits knowledge)
- VNSA4 - Applied animal welfare, health and husbandry in small animal practice (18 out of 22 credits knowledge)
- VNSA5 - Infection control in small animal practice (10 out of 16 credits knowledge)
- VNSA6 - Veterinary nursing care for hospitalised small animals (10 out of 15 credits knowledge)
- VNSA7 - Veterinary medicine supply in small animal practice (6 out of 11 credits knowledge)
- VNSA8 - Diagnostic imaging in small animal practice (14 out of 22 credits knowledge)
- VNSA10 - Operating theatre practice for small animal veterinary nurses (10 out of 23 credits knowledge)
- VNSA11 - Principles of supporting anaesthesia for small animal veterinary nurses (27 out of 27 credits knowledge)
- VNSA13 - Principles of small animal veterinary nursing support (16 out of 19 credits knowledge)
- VNSA15 - Principles of small animal peri-operative veterinary nursing support (14 out of 14 credits knowledge)
- VNSA17 - Veterinary nursing support for emergency and critical care of small animal patients (13 out of 17 credits knowledge)
- VNSA18 - Professionalism and ethics for small animal veterinary nurses (8 out of 8 credits knowledge)

ANNEX 2

Relationship between competence and knowledge qualifications

Level 3 – Pathway: Equine

There is one qualification, which includes both, competence and knowledge:

Central Qualifications Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing – Equine Practice

603/2317/6 Central Qualifications 299 credits 2990 hours TQT 1290 GLH

The competence and knowledge elements will be achieved through completion of the mandatory units listed within the awarding organisation's (Central Qualifications) guidance and will total 299 credits.

The units will be assessed by assignments, theory examinations, Central Skills Log portfolio and the OSCE. All units are mandatory.

Knowledge units

- VNEQ1- Operational requirements in equine practice (7 out of 9 credits knowledge)
- VNEQ2 - Professional relationships and communication in equine practice (7 out of 9 credits knowledge)
- VNEQ3 - Equine functional anatomy and physiology for veterinary nurses (28 out of 28 credits knowledge)
- VNEQ4 - Applied animal welfare, health and husbandry in equine practice (19 out of 22 credits knowledge)
- VNEQ5 - Infection control in equine practice (11 out of 18 credits knowledge)
- VNEQ6 - Veterinary nursing care for hospitalised equine patients (11 out of 15 credits knowledge)
- VNEQ7 - Veterinary medicine supply in equine practice (5 out of 11 credits knowledge)
- VNEQ8 - Diagnostic imaging in equine practice (15 out of 22 credits knowledge)
- VNEQ10 - Operating theatre practice for equine veterinary nurses (10 out of 23 credits knowledge)
- VNEQ11 - Supporting anaesthesia for equine veterinary nurses (25 out of 30 credits knowledge)
- VNEQ12 - Principles of neonatal care for equine veterinary nurses (12 out of 16 credits knowledge)
- VNEQ13 - Principles of equine veterinary nursing support (16 out of 20 credits knowledge)
- VNEQ15 - Principles of equine peri-operative veterinary nursing support (14 out of 14 credits knowledge)
- VNEQ17 - Veterinary nursing support for emergency and critical care of equine patients (13 out of 17 credits knowledge)
- VNEQ18 - Professionalism and ethics for equine veterinary nurses (8 out of 8 credits knowledge)