



## Higher National Unit specification: general information

**Unit title:** Veterinary Nursing: Professional Responsibility

**Unit code:** H0YW 35

**Superclass:** SN

**Publication date:** March 2012

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 01

### Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to assist candidates to understand and explore the concept of professional accountability and the responsibilities of registered practitioners. Consideration will be given to some of the moral and ethical conflicts that may arise while caring for animals and working with colleagues and how to apply strategies to resolve resultant conflicts or seek expert help where appropriate.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

- 1 Explain the legal framework and key legislation that governs veterinary practice.
- 2 Interpret and explain the accountability, legal and ethical responsibilities of veterinary nurses.
- 3 Apply ethical principles to critically analyse ethical problems and patient care issues arising in veterinary practice.

### Recommended prior knowledge and skills

It would be beneficial to have completed the SCQF Level 7 Unit *Veterinary Nursing: Client Relations* and have spent some time in a veterinary practice before starting this Unit.

### Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit credit at SCQF level 8: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8\*)

*\*SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

## **General information (cont)**

### **Core Skills**

There are opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Communication* and the Critical Thinking component of *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

### **Context for delivery**

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

## Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

**Unit title:** Veterinary Nursing: Professional Responsibility

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The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, Knowledge and/or Skills, and Evidence Requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

### Outcome 1

Explain the legal framework and key legislation that govern veterinary practice.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Common law
- ◆ Statutory law
- ◆ Civil law
- ◆ Criminal law
- ◆ Precedent
- ◆ National variations in law
- ◆ Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966
  - purpose
  - Schedule 3
  - scope of veterinary nursing practice
- ◆ Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006

#### Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ explain two key principles of statutory law or common law
- ◆ explain three key differences between civil and criminal law
- ◆ explain, using an example, how a precedent comes about
- ◆ explain the provisions of the Veterinary Surgeons Act in relation to veterinary nurses
- ◆ describe two variations in the Animal Health and Welfare Act between England and Scotland.

## Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

**Unit title:** Veterinary Nursing: Professional Responsibility

### Outcome 2

Interpret and explain the accountability, legal and ethical responsibilities of veterinary nurses.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Accountability
  - professional status
  - professional regulation
  - professional regulatory body
  - veterinary nursing byelaws
  - guide to professional conduct
- ◆ Legal and ethical responsibilities
  - duty of care
  - negligence
  - professional competence
  - personal scope of competence
  - whistle blowing
  - principles of consent.

#### Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ interpret and explain three aspects of accountability within the context of a given scenario
- ◆ interpret and explain three legal and ethical responsibilities within the context of the same scenario.

## Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

**Unit title:** Veterinary Nursing: Professional Responsibility

### Outcome 3

Apply ethical principles to critically analyse ethical problems and patient care issues arising in veterinary practice.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Ethical principles
  - utilitarianism
  - deontology
  - virtue ethics
  - major theorists
  - basis of arguments
  - individual character and conscience
- ◆ Ethical problems and patient care issues
  - patient, client and colleague issues
  - consent
  - treatment costs
  - animal abuse
  - euthanasia
  - poor professional practice and conduct

#### Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ Apply ethical principles to critically analyse an ethical problem or patient care issue arising in practice. Candidates should be guided to one of the following four focus areas:
  - Consent to treatment
  - Euthanasia of a healthy animal
  - Delegation of acts of veterinary surgery
  - Unprofessional conduct

## **Higher National Unit specification: support notes**

### **Unit title:     Veterinary Nursing: Professional Responsibility**

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

### **Guidance on the content and context for this Unit**

This Unit is designed to assist candidates to understand and explore the concept of professional accountability and the duties of registered practitioners. Consideration will be given to some of the moral and ethical conflicts that may arise while caring for animals and working with colleagues and how to apply strategies to resolve resultant conflicts or seek expert help where appropriate.

Although this Unit may be taken on a standalone basis by candidates in employment wishing to develop and/or enhance their skills, it is primarily intended for candidates who are studying towards the HND in Veterinary Nursing and the teaching and learning should be delivered in this context.

#### **Outcome 1**

This Outcome covers the legal framework that exists in the UK and should include statutory and common law, civil and criminal law and the process by which cases are conducted in these areas. The sources of law and the manner in which precedents are set should also be mentioned. Specific reference should be made to the provisions of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 and the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 with an emphasis on how this legislation affects veterinary nurses in practice. National variations in the Animal Health and Welfare Act should also be explored.

Candidates should have a general understanding of the Acts as a whole but a more specific understanding of how they apply to their own role in the veterinary industry.

## Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Veterinary Nursing: Professional Responsibility

### Outcome 2

This Outcome is designed to help candidates to understand the implications of accountability and the legal and ethical responsibilities of veterinary nurses in relation to themselves, their clients, the animals they care for and their work colleagues. Delivery should include the history of veterinary nursing and the journey to professional status.

Reference should be made to the purposes and principles of regulation and differences between voluntary and statutory regulation. The role of the regulatory body should include public protection, codes of conduct, byelaws and the investigation of complaints. Comparisons could be made between the veterinary industry and other non-veterinary regulators such as the General Dental Council and the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

With respect to legal and ethical responsibilities, candidates should have a clear understanding of the principle of 'Duty of Care' and should link this to the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act, negligence and professional competence (including the importance of maintaining competence and ongoing professional development).

Principles of consent must be covered in some detail and should include reference to the legal requirement for consent and the specific implications of 'informed consent'. Candidates should be able to distinguish between express and implied consent and identify potential barriers to informed consent in practice.

### Outcome 3

This Outcome includes the introduction of ethical schools of thought including utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics. Reference should be made to utilitarian costs and benefits versus rights and wrongs. Major theorists could include (examples such as) Bentham and Kant. Candidates should be able to recognise the basis of arguments and the role of individual character and conscience in a given situation.

In particular candidates should be equipped to identify ethical problems that may arise in practice relating to clients, animals or colleagues. Delivery may be enhanced by the use of examples involving consent, treatment costs, animal abuse, euthanasia or poor professional practice and conduct. On identification of these issues candidates should be able to apply ethical principles to analyse and resolve these issues and, where necessary, seek external assistance from relevant sources.

It should be noted that evidence for this Outcome should be handled in a sensitive and confidential manner due to the subject matter involved.

## Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Veterinary Nursing: Professional Responsibility

### Guidance on the delivery of this Unit

Although this Unit may be delivered on a stand-alone basis, it has been designed as part of the HND in Veterinary Nursing. It is recommended that candidates complete this Unit towards the end of the HND programme as it is designed to prepare them for professional registration and the responsibility and accountability of being a registered veterinary nurse.

Classroom delivery should focus on the theoretical aspects of the Unit but would be enhanced through the use of problem-based learning drawing on the experience of staff and candidates. Candidates will be expected to draw on their personal experience to identify suitable issues for further investigation.

### Guidance on the assessment of this Unit

Outcome 1 could be assessed using a closed-book written assessment lasting one hour and conducted in supervised conditions. Outcome 2 could be scenario-based with candidates answering structured questions in supervised open-book conditions lasting one hour. Outcome 3 could take the form of an investigation of an issue arising in practice and presented in the form of a report.

### Assessment Guidelines

#### Outcome 1

The assessment of this Outcome could be conducted as a closed-book written assessment lasting one hour.

#### Outcome 2

The assessment of this Outcome could be conducted as an open-book assessment consisting of structured questions based on a given scenario, undertaken in supervised conditions and lasting one hour.

Candidates can have access to key texts including the *Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons: Veterinary Nursing Guide to Professional Conduct* and the *Veterinary Nursing Byelaws*.

#### Outcome 3

This Outcome could be assessed by a report based on an open-book investigation of an incident which has arisen in practice. Candidates should apply ethical principles to analyse the incident and should produce a report.



## Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Veterinary Nursing: Professional Responsibility

### Online and Distance Learning

If this Unit is delivered by open or distance learning methods, additional resources will be required for candidate support, assessment and quality assurance. For further information and advice, please refer to the SQA guide: *Assessment and Quality Assurance for Open and Distance Learning* ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).

### Opportunities for developing Core Skills

There may be opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Communication* and the Critical Thinking component of *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills Components.

The response to the investigative report for Outcomes 3 may provide the opportunity to develop the written component of the Core Skill of *Communication* at SCQF level 6. This may also help to develop candidates' critical thinking skills as they will have to analyse the professional issue through the application of ethical principles in order to address or resolve the problem. This would provide the opportunity to develop the Critical Thinking component of the Core Skill of *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6.

### Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website [www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements)

## History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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## General information for candidates

### Unit title: Veterinary Nursing: Professional Responsibility

This Unit is designed to prepare you for professional registration and the responsibilities associated with this. It will help you to understand and explore the concept of professional accountability and the responsibilities of registered veterinary nurses. You will be introduced to some of the moral and ethical conflicts that may arise while caring for animals and working with colleagues and the strategies that you may use to resolve resultant conflicts or to seek expert help where appropriate.

It would be beneficial to have been in practice before starting this Unit and to have completed the SCQF Level 7 Unit *Veterinary Nursing: Client Relations*.

This Unit consists of three Outcomes:

#### Outcome 1

This Outcome covers the legal framework that exists in the UK. Specific reference is made to the provisions of the Veterinary surgeons Act 1966 and the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 with an emphasis on how this legislation affects veterinary nurses in practice.

#### Outcome 2

This Outcome is designed to help you to understand the implications of accountability and the legal and ethical duties of veterinary nurses in relation to yourself, the clients, animals you care for and your work colleagues. You will learn about the implications of professional status, regulation and the role of the regulatory body. Particular mention will be made of the 'Duty of Care' and its implications for veterinary nursing practice.

#### Outcome 3

Outcome 3 introduces ethical schools of thought including utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics and will focus on giving you the skills to identify ethical problems that may arise in practice. On identification of these issues you will be guided towards applying ethical principles to analyse and resolve these issues and, where necessary, seek external assistance from relevant sources.

#### Assessment

In order to complete this Unit successfully you will be required to achieve a satisfactory level of performance. Outcome 1 may be assessed using a closed-book written assessment consisting of structured questions and lasting 1 hour. Outcome 2 may be conducted in supervised open-book conditions, lasting one hour and you may be required to answer structured questions about a given scenario. Outcome 3 may be assessed as an investigative report, identifying an ethical issue arising in practice and applying ethical principles to resolve the issue.

There may be opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Communication* and the Critical Thinking component of *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills Components.