

INVITATION TO TENDER (ITT)

January 2024

The further development of Clinical Career
Pathways for Veterinary Surgeons in the UK.

Curriculum Development for Veterinary General
Practice (GP) Specialty Training.

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Introduction

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) is the statutory regulator for the veterinary profession in the UK. It is responsible under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 for keeping the register of veterinary surgeons eligible to practise in the UK, setting and monitoring standards for veterinary education and regulating the professional conduct of veterinary surgeons. It also exercises powers under its Royal Charter to award Fellowships, Diplomas and Certificates to veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and others.

Background

Clinical Career Pathways in the Veterinary Profession

The RCVS has a wide-ranging interest in setting and advancing standards within the veterinary profession.

Currently, when a veterinary student successfully graduates from an RCVS accredited veterinary degree programme, they are eligible to register and become a Member of the RCVS i.e. MRCVS, and practice independently in the UK. New graduates must then complete the Veterinary Graduate Development Programme (VetGDP) which provides support from a trained veterinary coach (VetGDP Adviser) to help their transition into the profession and develop their confidence and experience. VetGDP generally takes 12-18 months to complete.

The vast majority of new graduates entering clinical practice tend to enter a role within General Practice, as a vet working with companion animals, horses or farm animals, or in a mixed practice involving more than one of these areas. Following completion of VetGDP, the current clinical career pathway options in the veterinary profession are limited to:

- (i) train to become a specialist in a specific clinical discipline (by completing an internship and a residency – see below).
- (ii) continue working in clinical practice and complete a postgraduate certificate such as the RCVS Certificate of Advanced Veterinary Practice (CertAVP)¹ which entitles them to apply for RCVS 'Advanced Practitioner' status in a certain clinical area (once enhanced CPD and other criteria have been met).
- (iii) Remain on the register and keep up to date via continued professional development (CPD), but do not undertake further formal clinical education.

There is a high attrition rate within the profession, with many practitioners leaving the profession within the first 7 years following graduation. The reasons for this are likely to be multifaceted, but limited and inflexible clinical career pathways are known to be a contributing factor. Interns are generally paid a low salary, which may deter many vets who are keen to establish themselves financially or in a particular geographical location following 5+ years of study.

¹ Some practitioners complete multiple certificates, in different clinical areas, over time.

Many vets complete a Post Graduate Certificate (PGCert) and apply for Advanced Practitioner (AP) status, however once this has been achieved the impact of becoming an AP on an individual's work and types of clinical cases seen is highly variable. An AP in a relatively niche clinical area, where there are few specialists available to accept referrals, may see a more varied caseload and receive more financial reward as a result, whereas an AP in a more common area of clinical practice such as small animal medicine may see very little, if any, change to their role. This is likely to decrease any motivation to maintain their AP status in the longer term.

The term "Specialist" is protected, and only those listed on the relevant register are formally recognised as RCVS Specialists.

To be included on the list of Specialists, an individual must have achieved a postgraduate qualification at least at Level 8 in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ - Diploma level) and must additionally satisfy the College that they make an active contribution to their specialty. A Specialist must also be available for referral or consultation by other veterinary colleagues (if appropriate to their area of work). Specialist status is time bound, and the individual must reapply for recognition every five years (or earlier in certain cases) to maintain their name on the list.

Most UK specialists train with one of the 27 European specialist colleges that are recognised by the European Board of Veterinary Specialisation (EBVS). The education and training take at least 4 years after completing a veterinary degree. This training is typically divided into two main phases - an internship and a residency.

An internship is the first stage of postgraduate training; it lasts for at least one year and is undertaken before starting a residency. Due to the limited availability of residencies some practitioners undertake several internships before they are accepted onto a residency programme. The residency, which is the next phase, generally lasts for 3 years and is designed to offer in-depth education in the science and state-of-the-art practices of the selected veterinary discipline.

Currently, Veterinary general practice is not recognised as a 'speciality' in its own right, and there are no specialty training programmes focusing on general practice.

The Veterinary Clinical Career Pathways (VCCP) project

In November 2023, the RCVS Council approved a wide-ranging project to further develop the clinical career pathway opportunities for veterinary surgeons in the UK. This includes three ambitious workstreams. Full details can be found via this [link](#).

Workstream 1 aims to develop a new specialty training pathway for general practice (GP) vets. To our knowledge, this will be the first of its kind in the world. The project will establish the curriculum for the training, including (i) the purpose of the training, (ii) intended learning outcomes, (iii) a syllabus, (iv) educational model and learning / teaching / assessment methods, (v) suitable learning environments, (vi) entry requirements and (vii) an implementation plan.

The RCVS is keen to ensure that this work and our future proposals are evidence-based, having considered any lessons learned regarding the positive or negative impact of professional specialist-level education and training. Therefore, we are commissioning a review

of published evidence (including grey literature) in relation to: (i) the process, outcomes and impact of different approaches to higher / specialist training.

Contract Requirement: Rapid Review of Evidence

The RCVS wishes to appoint experienced contractors to carry out the evidence reviews for the project. The successful contractors will be able to work with the RCVS to review the published literature/evidence relating to specialist training and education in primary healthcare and generalist expertise.

The contract awarded will be for a duration of four months with an option for an extension for up to an additional six weeks if required.

Instruction to Tenderers

This invitation to tender has been prepared by the RCVS for the purpose of inviting proposals to complete a review of the literature / published evidence into the areas as set out in this document.

Objectives

This review of evidence is required in support of Workstream 1 of the VCCP project, and should address the following:

1. Describe the different approaches to this type / level of training in existence in other professions, including:
 - a. educational models,
 - b. learning, teaching and assessment methods
 - c. entry requirements / selection processes
 - d. learning environments
2. Describe the evidence available regarding the advantages / disadvantages of the different approaches, and any positive or negative impact particular aspects are known to have on areas such as:
 - a. Trainee satisfaction (with any of the factors, e.g. supervision, training, support)
 - b. Completion or attrition rates
 - c. Accessibility
 - d. Learner outcomes (programme-specific)
 - e. Other impact on the learner (e.g. on wellbeing, motivation, career progression)
 - f. Impact on workplaces and / or the wider profession

Scope

The review should consider published evidence – from relevant databases and grey literature – from 2003 onwards (the last 20 years). The literature search can be limited to publications in the English language but should consider any international studies or evidence.

As there may be a limited number of studies relating to existing programmes of veterinary specialty training, the scope of the literature search should include other health professions and law (if relevant).

Reporting

The project is being led by the Veterinary Clinical Career Pathways (VCCP) Working Group, which includes representatives from key stakeholders including practitioners, employers, educationalists, specialists and advanced practitioners.

The final report will be submitted to the working group.

Questions about this tender

Queries should be submitted by **5pm on 6 March 2024** by email to j.soreskog-turp@rcvs.org.uk. Please aggregate your queries as far as possible. Answers will be emailed to all those who have expressed an interest **by 13 March 2024**.

Summary of procurement timetable

Event	Date
Tender document published	24 January 2024
Deadline for receipt of expressions of interest and questions	6 March 2024
Response to questions	13 March 2024
Deadline for receipt of proposals	18 March 2024, 12 noon.
Interviews	w/c 25 March 2024
Successful applicant notified	2 April 2024
Contracting completed	8 April 2024
Draft research results, analysis and report narrative to be delivered to RCVS for feedback	8 August 2024
Final research results, analysis and report narrative to be delivered to RCVS	30 August 2024

Instruction for return of proposals

Please email your proposal by **12 noon on 18 March 2024**. Unfortunately, we will not be able to consider late or incomplete proposals.

Evaluation Criteria

Supplier responses will be assessed using the following criteria and weightings. A score will be given for each part of the information submitted that is to be assessed. The qualitative aspects of your response will be evaluated entirely on your response submitted.

Essential filter: Understanding of the aims and objectives for this RCVS project (if not met, not allowed to proceed)

Criteria	Weighting
Experience of research team and ability to deliver on the required service (including staff CVs and examples of previously published literature reviews).	30%
Quality and clarity of the proposal, including approach, methodology, and data sources.	30%
Responsiveness, transparency and flexibility	10%
Financial stability and long-term viability of the organisation	10%
Value for money	20%

The responses under each subcategory will be scored based on the following matrix:

Points	Interpretation
10	Excellent – A comprehensive and strong answer indicating the provider fully meets the requirements. A detailed response that directly responds to all requirements with no ambiguity and examples provided (where relevant).
7	Good – A commendable response that broadly responds to the requirement.
5	Adequate – An acceptable response but there may be some concerns that the organisation will not be able to meet the requirement in full. Or a less detailed response that broadly responds to the requirement with some ambiguity or lacking appropriate examples (where required).
3	Poor Response/Limited Evidence – There are indications that the organisation will not be able to achieve the outcomes required and / or has not provided appropriate evidence of experience to successfully deliver the work. Or, a response that is not entirely relevant to the requirement, with ambiguity and lacking specific detail.
0	Unacceptable – The answer is non-compliant or has little / no relevant information to demonstrate the organisation can achieve the required outcomes. No response or a response that is entirely irrelevant.

All scores will be added together to provide an overall total score for each subcategory/section which will then be calculated against the criteria weightings. Once all the criteria weightings have been calculated, they will be added together to provide an overall total score.

Please note that all your responses to the tender requirements and the pricing schedule will be incorporated into a contractual document.

Freedom of information

Applicants must provide an assurance that the proposed project is compliant with GDPR and how that assurance can be guaranteed.

Intellectual Property

All intellectual property rights in this tender document and all material provided by RCVS to applicants in connection with this tender are and shall remain the property of the RCVS. There may be an opportunity to publish the work as part of a wider publication in conjunction with the RCVS.

Additional information for bidders

- a. The indicative budget for this work is £25,000. Bidders may wish to include a cost structure for different levels of provision, particularly if they feel that significant value could be added by undertaking some additional work beyond this cost ceiling.
- b. You will not be entitled to claim from the RCVS any costs or expenses which you may incur in preparing your tender whether or not the tender is successful.
- c. Timeframe: The RCVS would require the final project report by 30 August 2024. It will inform and feed into a wider piece of work to develop the clinical career pathways for veterinary surgeons in the UK.