The following draft information is an extract of what will be included in the *ACM Animal Care and Management Training Package* Companion Volume User Guide: Veterinary Nursing Version 2.0.

This draft information is available for feedback. The revised content will be avaialble during the next consultation phase.

Introduction

About this Guide

This user guide is designed to assist Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to interpret the training package products and effectively design and deliver training for veterinary nursing. The guide covers several important aspects, addressing specific challenges and recommendations for enhancing training quality, including:

* Work placement and Mandatory Workplace Requirements (MWR)
* Entry requirements
* Units of competency
* Training and assessment

This guide is an optional companion volume developed by Skills Insight to support good practice implementation of the veterinary nursing qualifications and units of competency. It is not endorsed in the same way as units of competency and qualifications, and as such, it can be updated at any time. In time, it will provide an opportunity to showcase best practice from RTOs and provide a forum for sharing information and resources. If you have any ideas, resources, case studies or feedback to contribute to this guide, please provide your feedback via the Skills Insight Continuous Improvement Feedback Register.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the Companion Volume Implementation Guide (CVIG) for the ACM Animal Care and Management Training Package, Volume X.0. The CVIG is a mandatory requirement for Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs) to develop and includes information about all sectors of the ACM training package, not just veterinary nursing. This guide will, as far as possible, not replicate information about the veterinary nursing industry or training package products contained in the CVIG.

The following components are covered in this guide:

**Qualifications:**

* ACM4X426 Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing
* ACM5X226 Diploma of Veterinary Nursing

**Skill Sets:**

* ACMSSXXX01 Foundational Skill for Veterinary Nursing

**Units of competency:**

Units in the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing:

* ACMGEN Communicate effectively in animal-related workplaces
* ACMGEN Develop knowledge of animal anatomy and physiology for animal care work
* ACMGEN Maintain cleaning, hygiene and sterility standards in animal care workplaces
* ACMGEN Undertake administration and client service activities in a veterinary practice
* ACMINF Comply with infection prevention and control policies and procedures in animal care work
* ACMMIC Implant microchip in animals
* ACMVET Develop and apply knowledge of the veterinary industry to veterinary nursing practices
* ACMVET Triaging and responding to animal emergencies
* ACMVET Conduct animal care discussions with clients
* ACMVET Nurse animals
* ACMVET Prepare for and monitor anaesthesia and analgesia in animals
* ACMVET Perform veterinary dental nursing procedures
* ACMVET Perform clinical pathology procedures
* ACMVET Apply veterinary diagnostic imaging routines
* ACMVET Perform surgical nursing routines
* ACMVET Prepare, handle and administer veterinary medicine and restricted substances
* ACMVET Nurse foals
* ACMVET Provide intensive foal care and nursing

Units in the Diploma of Veterinary Nursing

* ACMVET Enhance professional practice in veterinary nursing
* ACMVET Apply veterinary nursing pathophysiology
* ACMVET Manage nursing requirements for specialised surgical procedures
* ACMVET Perform medical and minor surgical veterinary procedures
* ACMVET Carry out post-operative nursing routines
* ACMVET Apply advanced knowledge of anaesthesia in veterinary nursing practice
* ACMVET Provide nursing support for advanced veterinary dental surgery
* ACMVET Manage veterinary nursing procedures
* ACMVET Conduct veterinary nurse clinics
* ACMVET Apply principles of animal behaviour
* ACMVET Coordinate veterinary practice emergency preparedness
* ACMVET Perform emergency procedures to sustain life
* ACMVET Provide nursing support for critical care surgery

Section 1: Overview of key concepts in veterinary nursing training products

Definitions in veterinary nursing training products

This section provides definitions of common and key terms used throughout this user guide and within the veterinary nursing training products.

* Animals / Patients

Throughout the training products, the term ‘animal’ has been used when referring to animals in general. Where animals are under care and admitted to a veterinary nursing facility, the term patient is used.

* Client

Client is generally the term used to refer to an animal ‘owner’. However, in broader veterinary nursing contexts, not all animals/patients are presented for treatment by an owner or have owners. Sometimes, animals can be presented by or discharged from treatment to a carer, a handler or even a ‘finder’ (of wildlife or injured animals). The term ‘client’ has been used to cover all variations.

* Pre-requisites and entry requirements

**An entry requirement** is a condition an individual must meet before they can enrol in a qualification - they are the essential skills or knowledge that an individual needs to have to enable them to undertake the qualification. Entry requirements are expressed as ‘competencies’ (or if a licence is required to undertake the qualification).

A pre-requisite is a unit of competency that contains skills and knowledge that an individual needs to know and be able to do, before they can undertake a unit of competency.

* Health and safety reference

The terms ‘occupational health and safety’ (OHS) and ‘work health and safety’ (WHS) generally have the same meaning in the workplace. WHS has been used in all components. Where necessary, RTOs may choose to contextualise the unit of competency by referring to OHS.

* Mandatory Work Placement (MWR) and work placement

MWR where included, relates specifically to assessment, where the training products specifies that evidence of performance must be gathered in a workplace.

Where not specified as MWR, work placement may be a strategy used for training and/or assessment by an RTO to provide learners with in-situ training, experience, practice and opportunities to collect evidence for assessment. While the term work placement may be used in this guide, it can also include employment.

Key regulatory/licensing implications for delivering veterinary nursing qualifications

Veterinary legislation is predominately focused on the veterinary acts of science/medicine that may only be performed by veterinarians. This includes diagnosing, giving advice based on diagnoses, prescribing treatments and medications including euthanising animals and performing medical or surgical procedures.

Veterinary legislation varies in each state/territory and is dynamic, with legislation and regulation reviews and changes happening frequently.

Wording in the training products therefore advises users to check legislation and regulations in their own jurisdictions. That is, in the jurisdiction where the training is taking place.

Training package products are nationally accredited, and it is therefore challenging to incorporate training for skills and knowledge required in one or more jurisdictions which are unlawful to be performed in others. Not including knowledge or skills has the potential to limit portability across jurisdictions. Attempts have been made to ensure that knowledge of procedures has been included in the training products, and the flexibility to assess performance either with real animals under veterinary supervision where legally (and veterinarian) permitted, or in a simulated environment where not legally permitted.

Areas of legislation and regulation

Additional legislation and regulations that apply to work in the veterinary nursing industry include (but are not limited to):

* Animal welfare
* Drugs, poisons and restricted substances, including dispensing, administering, storing and handling
* Work health and safety
* Radiology
* Biosecurity
* Fair Work
* Australia Consumer Law (previously Fair Trading)
* Privacy (of client personal information)

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| **Example of Australian Consumer Law (ACL) in a Veterinary Nursing Context**  A veterinary nurse conducts a **paid nurse clinic** for a post-operative wound check and bandage change at a veterinary practice. During the appointment, the nurse explains the service to the client, including what will be done, how long it will take, and the cost.  Under the **Australian Consumer Law (Schedule 2 of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010)** this service is a consumer service and must be provided with **due care and skill**, be **fit for the stated purpose**, and be **provided within a reasonable time**.  If the veterinary nurse:   * performs the wound check competently and in accordance with workplace procedures * uses appropriate infection-control measures, and * accurately documents observations and escalates concerns to the veterinarian where required   then the service is likely to comply with ACL obligations.  However, if the nurse:   * provides advice outside their **scope of practice** (e.g. diagnosing an infection or altering a prescribed treatment) * makes misleading statements such as guaranteeing a specific healing outcome, or * performs the service negligently or contrary to clinic protocols   the practice may breach the ACL’s **consumer guarantees**. This could entitle the client to remedies such as a refund or further corrective treatment. |

Imaging

In most states/territories, individuals operating radiography equipment such as x-rays or ultrasounds, are required to attain a licence. A permit or authority is required in most states/territories to implant identification devices in cats and dogs, and to access identification databases.

Unit suitability for specific jurisdictions

RTOs must ensure their training and assessment complies with the ‘scope of work’ for veterinary nurses in their jurisdictions.

Some units of competency, electives in the Diploma of Veterinary Nursing, may only be able to be offered by RTOs delivering training in Western Australia, such as:

* Perform medical and minor surgical veterinary procedures
* Apply advanced knowledge of anaesthesia in veterinary nursing practice.

Western Australia has two categories of veterinary nurse registration – a general veterinary nurse and an advanced veterinary nurse. While both categories of nurse are required to work under veterinarian supervision, the level of supervision varies, as does the veterinary procedures the nurses are permitted to perform, including some of which are not able to be performed in other jurisdictions.

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| In Western Australia a registered nurse may intubate a patient and administer an anaesthetic agent (prescribed by a veterinarian). In Queensland ‘induction of general anaesthesia is identified as an act of veterinary science and can only be administered by a registered veterinarian’ (Veterinary Surgeons Board of Queensland  <https://www.vsb.qld.gov.au/for-vets/guidelines-and-policies/veterinarian-nurses>) |

Entry Requirements and suitability

Clause 3.5.1 of the TPOF specifies that entry requirements must be:

‘specific to the knowledge, skills, or experience required to commence the qualification, and expressed in terms of competency or licensing’

Additionally, the TPOF requires that training package products meet anti-discrimination and access and equity principles. This includes removing barriers that may limit individuals’ access to qualifications and recognising that individuals may acquire competencies in multiple ways, not limited to attaining specified qualifications, units of competency or their equivalents.

It is also important to ensure entry requirements relate specifically to the competencies needed to undertake the qualification.

Entry requirements are specific to the competencies (or licence requirements) to undertake the qualification.

Other ‘suitability for the industry’ requirements such as physical fitness, age, vaccination status, criminal history or even ‘suitability for specific training models’, such as personal attributes can be specified by the RTO if required.

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| For example, in some states/territories a licence is necessary to operate radiation equipment. To apply for a licence, an individual must be 18+ years of age (and have completed a specified veterinary nursing qualification).  In these jurisdictions, it is therefore not possible, for an individual to have (or apply for) a radiation licence before commencing the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing, and as the requirement for an individual to be a minimum of 18 years of age is for the licence, it is not a requirement to undertake the qualification.  RTOs should, under their RTO obligations, clearly provide information to learners about licence requirements and other industry expectations prior to enrolment. |

An RTO could choose to assess whether a prospective learner has the required competencies for entry through applying a range of strategies such as:

* developing recognition processes (collecting evidence)
* administering Literacy, Language and Numeracy (LLN) indicators
* offering accredited units or non-accredited short courses
* delivering Certificate II or Certificate III ‘pathway’ programs, packaging elective units specifically aligned to the competencies required for entry into the Certificate IV, or
* offering the Foundational Skills for Veterinary Nursing Skill Set (for the Certificate IV).

Entry to Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing – ACMSSXXX01 Foundational Skills for Veterinary Nursing

RTOs can package any units of competency they have on their scope of registration into ‘courses’ of varying durations to meet various industry or learner needs - and issue a Statement of Attainment for the units achieved.

RTOs can also continue to deliver pathways from Certificate II or Certificate III animal care or animal science qualifications to meet entry requirements. During the Skills Review, a criticism raised of the current approach by RTOs is that units of competency from more general animal care qualifications are not specific to veterinary nursing applications. However, acknowledging ‘credit’ for completed units is mandatory, the units could not be re-delivered in a veterinary nursing context.

Additionally, the selection of electives may not necessarily be aligned to the required entry ‘competencies’.

The ACMSSXXX01 Foundational Skills for Veterinary Nursing includes units from both the Certificate II in Animal Care and Certificate III in Animal Care and Management and provides an opportunity for RTOs to deliver units of competency which largely align with the entry requirements and contextualise the delivery/assessment to a veterinary nursing specific context.

Delivery structure consideration for the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing

Training products do not specify training or delivery models that RTOs must implement. RTOs have their own characteristics, organisational structures, target learner cohorts, industry relationships and infrastructures that contribute towards training delivery decisions.

Based during the Veterinary Nursing Skills Review identified that many veterinary nursing students had very little awareness of the veterinary nursing industry. A new unit of competency was developed (Develop knowledge of the veterinary industry and apply to veterinary nursing practice).

It is recommended that this unit be considered an ‘introductory’ unit and delivered in the early phase of the course.

Section 2: Work placement

This section addresses work placement as distinct from mandatory workplace requirements (MWR), which is addressed starting page 16.

Whether ‘work placement’ is an external employer hosted arrangement or in an operational veterinary practice within the RTO, ensuring work placement arrangements are carefully planned and implemented is critical.

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| Inclusion of work placement or employment as a training/delivery strategy is strongly supported by industry:   * ‘Work placement for vet nurses is a critical way of them practicing using the knowledge and skills they acquire throughout their course’ * ‘Industry work placement needs to be included in the training … to prepare the student for the real work role context’ |

Hours of work placement for training or skill acquisition

The training package products do not specify any (minimum or maximum) number of hours of work placement for either training or assessment. RTOs must determine how they will ensure their learners are trained and have opportunities to practice their skills and apply their knowledge before they are assessed.

Facility variations for work placement

Veterinary nursing training facilities vary significantly between providers – some have operational veterinary practices where procedures are carried out on real animals with real clients by registered veterinarians; others have fully equipped ‘simulated’ environments although they may not be operational facilities, others have contractual arrangements with veterinary practices to use facilities for training purposes and still others ‘place’ learners (or require learners to source placement) in individual veterinary practices (that is, work placement for the purpose of training, experience, gaining skills).

Timing of work placement

If work placement is a suitable or required strategy (for training), consider how it is incorporated in the training delivery and when. When are the most appropriate times it can be used to support and develop student’s skills and knowledge? From the beginning of the course? In blocks of placement? Or as a regular activity each week? Or does it vary depending on the units being trained – are there ‘seasonal’ or other impacts on workplace activities?

Simulations to complement work placement for skill development

Opportunities for use of simulation to prepare learners using various facilities range from trainer led ‘simulation sessions’ in practice environments, on-campus clinics with live animals and some with real clients, to fully simulated facilities with animal models.

Selection of work placements

RTOs should note that while learners being ‘required’ to source their own workplaces is a strategy that an RTO may use to develop a learner’s ‘job search’ skills, if work placement is a mandatory requirement of the course (either as specified in the training package product, or as an RTO training strategy) learners may need to be supported and assisted to avoid disadvantaging them in their ability to achieve the course outcomes. Depending on the workplace, learner’s may need to undertake work placement at more than one practice.

There is mixed opinion on the benefits of learners undertaking work placement in more than one workplace. Certainly, for RTOs, learners having multiple workplaces would require considerably more RTO resources to manage. However, RTOs do need to ensure that workplaces are suitable, safe (both physically and psychosocially) and able to provide the learner with the necessary opportunities to undertake the procedures required by the units of competency.

Supervisory requirements in work placement and MWR

Supervisory requirements for learners undertaking work placement, for training and/or for assessment, must be negotiated and clearly agreed between the RTO and the workplace.

This includes clearly identifying:

* the required level and adequacy of supervision for the placement and for individual tasks/activities undertaken in the workplace, noting that:
  + a student may be supervised generally in the workplace by a practice manager or an experienced and/or qualified veterinary nurse, while veterinary procedures (and other acts of veterinary science/medicine such as diagnosing, prescribing, administering, treating, advising etc) must be supervised/directed by a registered veterinarian.
* roles and responsibilities of specific workplace and RTO personnel in:
  + providing training to the learner
  + managing learner problems or issues
  + observing learner performance and ‘signing off’
  + managing learner health, wellbeing and safety.

Workplace health and safety

Workplace health and safety requirements in relation to work placements and the agreements between training providers and work placement providers vary across jurisdictions. As a minimum, the RTO needs to ensure that the workplace chosen provides a safe (physically and psychosocially) environment for its students, that relevant workplace health and safety training has taken place before the work placement and that the workplace provides a safety induction for the student and appropriate supervision during the entire placement.

RTOs should ensure they meet the insurance obligations of their registration against the RTO standards and seek advice from their Workcover or workers’ compensation insurance provider regarding adequate cover for students’ activities.

Work placements and payment

Fair Work Australia have fact sheets available about vocational placement.

For a placement to be a ‘vocational placement’, Fair Work identifies the following conditions must be met:

* must be a placement, arranged by the training provider or student as a course requirement
* must be no entitlement to payment
* placement must be a requirement of an education or training course
* institution delivering the course which provides for the placement must be authorised under an Australian, state or territory law or an administrative arrangement of the Commonwealth or a state or territory to do so.

Guidelines for using work placement

When considering work placement in the delivery of veterinary nursing consider:

1. **Clearly determine and understand the objectives /required outcomes from work placement:**

* Evaluate benefits and risks of work placement for:
  + RTO
  + Employer / industry
  + Learner
* What is the purpose?
  + For training?
  + For skill development?
  + For assessment? (including MWR?)
* What is the duration of placements?
* What is the timing of placements?
* How are placements facilitated? (RTO facilitated or student initiated?)
* Model? (RTO visits, frequency and purpose?)

1. **Roles, responsibilities, capabilities and capacities of all parties.**

* RTO resources (Facilitator? Administration? Trainers/assessors?)
* Workplace personnel (Supervisor(s), qualifications or experience, contact)
* Confirm the suitability of the workplace:
  + Does the workplace typically provide the range of veterinary services and/or species required by the training products?
  + Does the workplace have the required equipment and resources (e.g. x-ray, pathology equipment, ultra-sound, product ranges etc)
  + Commitment to the objectives of work placement – that is, is the workplace able (and willing) to provide sufficient opportunities for students to a) practice and develop skills and/or b) demonstrate skills (assessment).

1. **Prepare and implement work placement procedures.**

Sample: Introduction to work placement for employers

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| Thank you for your interest in becoming involved in a work placement program.  Your involvement will provide students with great exposure to the real world of industry and help them develop the practical skills that industry needs – by putting theory into practice.  For host employers, work placement:   * provides access, without obligation, to potential trained employees * enhances productivity in your industry by making training programs more relevant * positions your organisation as one which cares about the industry’s future by helping students improve their skills and increase their employment opportunities.   **How does it work?**  A registered training organisation (RTO) may have a work placement coordinator whose job it is to match students and employers in terms of skills to be acquired and opportunities for learning in the workplace, or students may be encouraged to approach employers directly for opportunities to participate in work placement.  The RTO will discuss details of the proposed placement with you, including:   * the RTOs’ requirements and expectations of the placement * your requirements and expectations of the placement * the timing and duration of the placement including * the type of work the student will be doing while at the workplace * supervision arrangements.   **What sort of work can the student do?**  Unlike an employee engagement, the objectives of work placement are aligned to training programs. Therefore, the type of work a student would be doing needs to also align with opportunities to apply the knowledge they are learning about in their program and practicing and/or demonstrating skills.  Depending on the type of work placement, the RTO may ask you to participate in collecting evidence of the student’s performance (application of their skills) in the workplace by recording your observations. If this is the case, the RTO will provide you with necessary information and tools. In addition, students will record the work activities they have done and will ask you to confirm these activities. |

Section 3: Delivery and assessment of veterinary nursing units of competency

Mandatory Workplace Requirements (MWR) as distinct from placement

Section 2.10 of the TPOF specifies that:

‘Mandatory workplace requirements are those assessment components that must be completed in a workplace and cannot be achieved in a simulated environment. They relate to assessment requirements only and not to ‘work placement’ generally’

A mandatory workplace requirement (MWR) in a training product is different to a work placement that is voluntarily adopted by an RTO as a mode of delivery, and from training conducted under a contract of employment (as in traineeships). When used in training package products, MWR are related to the conditions under which specified performance evidence and/or knowledge evidence are demonstrated in the workplace. Mandatory workplace requirements are therefore tied to assessment and the demonstration of required skills and knowledge.

In units of competency where it is considered necessary to collect evidence of performance in the workplace, units will contain information in the Performance Evidence and Assessment Conditions to this effect, such as:

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| Performance must be demonstrated in a veterinary hospital or practice or an environment that accurately reflects a veterinary practice or veterinary hospital where specialised surgical procedures are carried out on real animals. |

**Units of competency where MWR apply contain the wording:**

*Mandatory workplace requirements apply to this unit of competency and are specified in the Performance Evidence and Assessment Conditions of the Assessment Requirements.*

Units including MWR are also identified in the qualification - noted with a # symbol.

**Where MWR do not apply, units have the wording specified by the TPOF:**

*Assessment of performance evidence may be in a workplace setting or an environment that accurately represents a real workplace.*

More information about what is considered a ‘workplace’ or an ‘environment that accurately reflects a’ workplace for the application of MWR where they apply is discussed in the work placement section starting on page 16.

RTOs will determine in planning their assessment methods, as part of their overall qualification planning, how much time should be allocated or allowed for collecting evidence of performance in the workplace.

Assessment requirements in units of competency

Assessment requirements in the training products do not prescribe how an RTO will undertake assessment (that is, how they will collect the necessary evidence to determine competence).

RTOs are strongly encouraged to holistically assess units of competency. This is not to be confused with clustering units, which can sometimes be called ‘integrated assessment’.

Holistic assessment focuses on evaluating the learner’s integrated application of knowledge and skills in real practice - not on checking off each knowledge bullet point, element, or performance criterion in isolation.

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| For example, to ‘Conduct veterinary nurse clinics’, holistic assessment recognises that a competent veterinary nurse does not perform tasks as separate fragments. Instead, they:   * assess an animal * interpret findings * communicate with a client * perform a procedure * apply infection prevention and control (IPC) and WHS procedures * document the case, and * escalate when needed.   These actions occur **together**, in context, and cannot be meaningfully separated. Holistic assessment replicates this reality.  Holistic assessment begins by identifying authentic activities or tasks that naturally demonstrate multiple parts of the unit simultaneously, which are generally the tasks described in the Performance Evidence, such as:   * conducting a preventative care clinic involving vaccinations or injectable therapies * performing wound care or post-operative outpatient care * delivering a chronic disease or weight-management program * performing a minor clinical procedure   Each of these activities **naturally integrates**:   * clinical reasoning * communication * technical skills * behavioural assessment * documentation * adherence to legislation * WHS/infection prevention and control   These become the foundation of the assessment method—not the individual dot points.  This is the essence of holistic assessment - one rich assessment activity produces evidence across many parts of the unit. |

Holistic assessment essentially identifies ‘what competence – in the overall unit - looks like’ rather than explicitly gathering evidence for each required knowledge bullet point or each required skill separately (or has been seen in some cases, each element or performance criteria).

**RTOs should, in the first instance consider what are the most applicable and appropriate assessment method(s) for each unit of competency. That is, how the required evidence should best be collected, in their own context.**

**These could include:**

* **Direct observation by the assessor**
* **Product based methods (work samples, portfolio, videos, logbooks)**
* **Questioning (oral questions, quiz/test, interview, case study)**
* **Third party evidence (workplace supervisor report)**

**Assessment tools** are the resources that structure and guide the collection of that evidence. Assessment tools may include the context and conditions of the assessment, the tasks or activities to be completed, the evidence to be collected, the criteria to judge the quality of the evidence (marking guides or ‘decision making rules’) and administration requirements.

The methods and tools will in turn determine the necessary assessment instruments which are required to collect and record the evidence, such as observation checklists or marking checklists with benchmarks.

When to assess

RTOs are urged to consider how and when assessment is undertaken, particularly in relation to ‘in the workplace’ assessment. RTOs are encouraged to assess progressively (collect evidence from the workplace regularly as individuals demonstrate performance) rather than as a ‘final submission’ of evidence for all the units in the qualification.

Specifically in relation to veterinary nursing, there has been concern in the past, that there has been an over-reliance on assessment of practical skills through third party reports written by personnel who are not qualified assessors, and a perception that the assessments are less robust, valid or reliable than industry expects.

Industry recommends that the best practice method for assessing the key tasks listed in the performance evidence is through direct observation of skills by a/the qualified assessor, to ensure that the assessment is valid, reliable and accurately reflects the standards required in the unit.

However, it is also acknowledged that the training products expect a significant amount of evidence of performance to be demonstrated ‘in the workplace’, presenting significant resourcing issues for RTOs.

RTOs are encouraged to consider ways of ensuring the quality – reliability and validity – of the evidence collected in the workplace by third parties. This might include:

* conducting interviews with the supervising workplace personnel to verify the reported evidence
* clinically simulating assessment prior to MWR, and then using workplace evidence to confirm/verify direct assessor observations
* designing assessment instruments to directly observe performance from multiple units on scheduled workplace visits
* providing information, training, tools and support for the workplace third parties to understand the requirements and meet the expectations of the RTO in gathering evidence.

Knowledge evidence can be assessed in several ways, including through oral questioning (with an appropriate recording of the evidence provided), or through written/online assessment such as questions, or provision of responses to case studies or scenarios.

Assessing knowledge especially at an AQF level 4 and 5 requires more than learners recalling facts or definitions (such as ‘what is the name of the legislation?’). It involves requiring the learner to demonstrate understanding and the ability to apply knowledge in context. Assessors should look for evidence that the learner can explain concepts in their own words, connect theory to workplace situations, and make informed conclusions based on that knowledge. This approach ensures that knowledge is not superficial, but reflects the depth, breadth and cognitive skills expected at these qualification levels.

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| Holistic assessment does not ask each discrete knowledge point separately (‘list four contraindications’, ‘list three vaccines’).  Instead, it may use **scenario-based questions**, such as:  ‘A dog presents for a weight-loss clinic with a history of osteoarthritis and intermittent skin allergies. Outline your approach to assessment, client education, legal scope considerations, potential medication interactions, monitoring needs and follow-up’.  This integrates:   * vaccination knowledge * medication mechanisms * chronic disease understanding * nutritional principles * communication * professional and ethical responsibilities. |

Whilst multiple choice questions can be time and resource efficient where RTO’s systems can ‘auto-mark’, RTOs are encouraged to ensure that evidence of student’s knowledge is valid. If using multiple choice questions, RTOs should supplement this assessment method to confirm the knowledge, such as in application. This could include conversations or oral questions during direct observations asking the student what they are doing (what they did) and why, or ‘what would happen if?’ type questions.

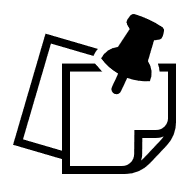
Assessment conditions

Assessment conditions in the units of competency specify the mandatory conditions that must be applied in the assessment processes, including:

* conditions under which evidence for assessment must be gathered, such as whether it must be undertaken in a real work environment or, if in a ‘simulated’ work environment, what that should include
* specific assessor requirements (if these exceed the assessor requirements in the Credentials Policy) including any specific licences, registrations or credentials
* necessary resources, such as equipment, personnel, industry and/or workplace documentation, materials etc

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| **TPOF 2.10 Units of competency – mandatory workplace requirements**  Mandatory workplace requirements are those assessment components that must be completed in a workplace and cannot be achieved in a simulated environment. They relate to assessment requirements only and not to ‘work placement’ generally.  A mandatory workplace requirement must be clearly identified in the assessment requirements (in Performance Evidence).  Assessment Conditions fields must specify any mandatory workplace requirements under the subheading ‘Mandatory workplace requirements’ and where no mandatory workplace requirements exist, must include the wording:  *Assessment of performance evidence may be in a workplace setting or an environment that accurately represents a real workplace.* |

Assessment of many veterinary nursing (VET) classified units of competency require evidence of performance in a veterinary practice or an environment that accurately reflects a real veterinary practice where procedures or treatments are performed on real animals, by veterinarians with veterinary nurses supervised and/or directed by veterinarians.

This is classified as ‘mandatory work placement’ (MWR) in the VET units and is specified in the Performance Evidence@ and in the Assessment Conditions^ as:

@Performance must be demonstrated in a veterinary practice or an environment that accurately reflects a veterinary practice where dental procedures are carried out on real animals

^ Skills must be demonstrated in a veterinary practice or an environment that accurately reflects a veterinary practice where dental procedures are carried out on real animals.

Additional wording in the units required by the TPOF:

Mandatory workplace requirements apply to this unit of competency and are specified in the Performance Evidence and Assessment Conditions of the Assessment Requirements.

Where this is specified, it refers to an operational veterinary practice (a general practice, clinic, hospital, specialist centre, even a remote or mobile veterinary workplace) where treatments or procedures (as specified in the performance evidence of the unit) are carried out on real animals, by (that is, under the supervision of) registered veterinarians.

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| Currently, a number of ACMVET units include reference to ‘relationships’ in the Assessment Conditions, such as:  ‘interactions with a registered veterinarian or minimum of Certificate IV qualified veterinary nurse’  As MWR can only be undertaken in an operational veterinary facility, and veterinary procedures can only be performed by, and directed and/or supervised by a registered veterinarian, this wording has been removed to avoid confusion.  A veterinary nursing learner can be ‘generally’ supervised by a veterinary nurse, including an experienced nurse (who may not necessarily have a Certificate IV qualification) or a practice manager within the workplace, however veterinary procedures must be directed or supervised by a registered veterinarian. |

The inclusion of the wording ‘or an environment that accurately reflects a real veterinary practice’ (or similar, when used with the condition for MWR) enables the collection of performance evidence in on-campus operational veterinary practices where, similar to work placement in external facilities, procedures are carried out on real animals by registered veterinarians.

Where MWR do not apply to a unit of competency, the Assessment Conditions will include the statement:

Assessment of performance evidence may be in a workplace setting or an environment that accurately represents a real workplace.

In this instance, evidence may be gathered in a real workplace (including as above, an on-campus operational facility) OR it may be gathered in a simulated environment such as a campus veterinary clinic that has all the necessary equipment, resources and materials of a veterinary practice, but may not be operational as a veterinary practice. RTO may use methods of assessment that involve case studies, realistic simulations including of client/team member / veterinarian interactions and performing procedures using animal models or other aids rather than real animals.

RTOs are recommended to ensure a full understanding of the assessment requirements of the training products and to plan ‘work placement’ including MWR accordingly.

Section 4: Examples

Principle 7 of the TPOF requires that ‘Qualifications and Units of Competency are designed with an appropriate level of specificity that allows for flexible training and assessment, and minimises the need for frequent updates, except where a higher level of detail is required for licencing, high-risk, safety or regulatory reasons’ and that ‘units of competency include the minimum level of prescriptive detail necessary to enable quality training and assessment’.

Section 5: Useful links

The following information may be useful in developing, delivering and assessing veterinary nursing qualifications and /or units of competency:

* Australian Veterinary Association (AVA): Legislative and regulatory environment for veterinary professionals:

The legislative and regulatory environment of veterinarians can be complex and depend on their location and type of work. It is important that veterinarians and members of the veterinary industry are familiar with the legislative environment they operate in.

<https://www.ava.com.au/library-journals-and-resources/ava-other-resources/legislation-for-veterinary-professionals/>

<https://www.ava.com.au/policy-advocacy/policies/professional-practices-for-veterinarians/restricted-acts-of-veterinary-science/>

* Fair Work:

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/starting-employment/unpaid-work/student-placements>

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/tools-and-resources/fact-sheets/unpaid-work/student-placements>

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employment-conditions/awards/awards-summary/ma000118-summary>

Animal Care and Veterinary Services Award 2020: <https://awards.fairwork.gov.au/MA000118.html>

* Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia (VNCA): Day One Competency Standards

<https://www.vnca.asn.au/vnca-day-one-competency-standards>

* Department of Employment and Workplace Relations: Outcome Standards Policy Guidance

<https://www.dewr.gov.au/revisions-standards-registered-training-organisations/resources/outcome-standards-policy-guidance>

* Australian Veterinary Association (AVA): Infection prevention and control in veterinary workplaces

<https://www.ava.com.au/policy-advocacy/policies/surgical-medical-and-other-veterinary-procedures-general/infection-prevention-and-control-in-veterinary-workplaces/>

Appendix: Background of the Veterinary Nursing Review 2025

In 2025, Skills Insight undertook a review of the contexts in which veterinary nurses operate. It included a series of consultation activities with the veterinary sector to gain an understanding of the current industry, including its complexities, variables and workforce challenges and identify how nationally endorsed training package products (qualifications, skill sets and units of competency) for veterinary nursing skills may be adapted.

Significantly, the Skills Review identified that roles and responsibilities of veterinary nurses and consequently the knowledge and skills required, vary considerably due to a wide range of factors, including:

* practice context, such as whether nursing is in a general practice, animal hospital, specialist centre, emergency or critical care practice or other more specific or specialised context
* practice location (rural, regional, metropolitan, remote) and species
* varying state/territory legislation relating to regulated acts of veterinary science / medicine or handling of drugs and poisons
* organisational structures and role allocations.

The Veterinary Nursing Skills Review Report was published in June 2025 and the full report, which has contributed to the Training Package product development process can be found at: https://skillsinsight.com.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/REP.SkillsReview.VeterinaryNursing.pdf.

On 1 July 2025, a revised Training Package Organising Framework (TPOF) came into effect, outlining the product and process requirements to be complied with for all national training package products and the release of new and updated design templates which were the result of earlier projects in Qualification Reform.

In August 2025, a veterinary nursing Technical Committee (TC) was formed to provide expertise and guidance to assist Skills Insight in decisions relating to the review and re-development of the veterinary nursing Training Package products.

‘The Technical Committee will help shape qualifications and other training package products so that they meet industry needs and produce real-life job outcomes in veterinary nursing. This will be done in line with the new approach to qualification design (qualification reform) and the new [Training Package Organising Framework](https://www.dewr.gov.au/training-package-assurance/resources/training-package-organising-framework-effective-1-july-2025) (TPOF), which became effective from 1 July 2025’

Key changes to training products in the Veterinary Nursing Review 2025/2026

Issues with the training products identified in the Skills Review which the Veterinary Nursing Review (VNR) of training package products sought to address included:

* duplication of content across multiple units
* limited flexibility
* heavily focused on cats and dogs
* unsuitability of Diploma for advancing clinical nursing skills due to qualification structure
* core units which feedback suggested should be elective
* graduates performing tasks without depth of understanding why
* out of date procedures
* Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) level of veterinary nursing knowledge and skills within workplaces and for qualification design
* new veterinary nurse categories and changes to veterinary nursing registration legislation in Western Australia (WA)
* variations in scope of veterinary nurse practices

Additionally, TPOF issues needing to be reviewed and redesigned, included:

* entry requirements
* Mandatory Workplace Requirements (MWR)

Key changes to the Training Package products therefore include:

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| Retention of the Certification IV in Veterinary Nursing with changes to core and elective units |
| Restructuring of the Diploma of Veterinary Nursing qualification to focus on advancing skills and knowledge in clinical nursing rather than practice management. Removal of non-clinical nursing core units of competency and changes to ‘specialisation’ outcomes, and addition of general electives.   * The Technical Committee strongly supports the refocus to advanced clinical nursing skills, indicating practice management skills can be achieved in non-veterinary nursing specific qualifications such as are available in business, leadership or management. |
| Expressing ‘entry requirements’ in both qualifications as ‘competencies’ rather than as required qualifications or specified units of competency and recognising that competencies can be attained in multiple ways to remove barriers to entry. |
| Developing a new Foundational Skills for Veterinary Nursing Skill Set, designed with units of competency to specifically support individuals to undertake further studies in veterinary nursing |
| Removing specified number of hours (240) of work placement required in all vocational nursing (VET) classified units of competency |
| Splitting and merging content in re-design of units of competency as outlined in mapping documentation |
| Re-templating training package products (qualifications and units of competency) to the 2025 templates, with changes including:   * inclusion of foundation skills at the qualification level indicative of the ‘foundation skill outcomes a competent learner is expected to have upon completion of the qualification’, formatted as a bar chart against the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) skills * reformatting of foundation skills within units of competency * use of two unit of competency templates (Application, Elements and Performance Criteria – EPC, and Application of Skills and Knowledge – ASK) |
| Developing 4 new units of competency:   * Develop knowledge of the veterinary industry and apply to veterinary nursing practice (Certificate IV) * Apply advanced knowledge of anaesthesia in veterinary nursing practice (Diploma) * Conduct veterinary nurse clinics (Diploma) * Perform medical and minor surgical veterinary procedures (Diploma) |
| Removing 3 units of competency from the veterinary nursing training products:   * ACMVET411 Prepare, deliver and review animal care education programs * ACMVET412 Coordinate practice promotional activities * ACMVET512 Develop and implement specific practice policies |

Changes to entry requirements

There was support from the Technical Committee (TC) that entry requirements should include basic animal handling, nutrition, hygiene, workplace safety, teamwork and literacy and numeracy skills for the Certificate IV and ‘*skill and experience required to work as a veterinary nurse*’ for the Diploma.

Considerations for work placement

**Some considerations for RTOs when planning work placements**

There is mixed opinion on the benefits of learners undertaking work placement in more than one workplace. Certainly, for RTOs, learners having multiple workplaces would require considerably more RTO resources to manage. However, RTOs do need to ensure that workplaces are suitable, safe (both physically and psychosocially) and able to provide the learner with the necessary opportunities to undertake the procedures required by the units of competency.

Feedback has indicated that:

* staying in the same clinic can build learner confidence and lead to potential job opportunities
* some placement clinics don't get exposure to all species and procedures, and students at such clinics are disadvantaged and that ideally students would also rotate through different types of workplaces, so they get wide experience in different areas
* access to a veterinary workplace through employment typically provides learners more opportunities in the workplace than ‘volunteers’ (i.e. students on placements)
* learners can find sourcing their own placements to be challenging and more support from the RTOs would be beneficial
* having little to no other experiences on which to judge, some learners indicated they didn’t know that the workplace they were in may not have been indicative of ‘normal’ practice

Changes to mandatory workplace requirements

Prior to this review, all veterinary nursing (VET) classified units of competency required that individuals ‘performed the activities outlined in the performance criteria of this unit during a period of at least 240 hours of work in a veterinary practice’.

Many registered training organisations (RTOs) have implemented veterinary nursing training delivery models that include work placement (such as for blended programs where theory is delivered online) or work-based delivery to provide learners with high-quality learning experiences and outcomes.

However, a sampling of RTO work placement models identified inconsistencies in the application and interpretation of the ‘mandatory 240 hours of work placement’ (for assessment) as well as how assessment is actually conducted in the workplace (signed off by workplace personnel, directly observed by assessor or video recorded and submitted for assessor observation). Some RTOs require learners to participate in significantly more than 240 hours of work placement, but do not differentiate between hours used for ‘skill acquisition’ (that is, training, learning, practicing) and the 240 specified for assessment.

Throughout the Skills Review, there was considerable discussion and comment about ‘how many hours’ of work placement should be included in the qualification.

In 2022, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) produced a Mandatory Workplace Requirements: Good Practice Guide for JSCs when developing training products.

<https://www.dewr.gov.au/skills-reform/resources/mandatory-workplace-requirements-good-practice-guide>

The Technical Committee (TC) during the Veterinary Nursing Review considered the purpose of MWR in veterinary qualifications (i.e. what is the problem MWR are trying to address?), including:

* What is the effectiveness of current MWR?
* Are there other options that could address the problem/s?
* What specific skills or knowledge outcomes would, or are able to be, demonstrated through MWR?
* What outcomes would not be able to (reliably and across all veterinary contexts) be demonstrated through MWR?
* What constitutes a ‘workplace’ for the application of MWR (vs work placement for training and practice)?

The TC considered the issues of MWR including specifying a number of hours, and provided a range of feedback including that:

* as simulations are becoming increasingly prevalent as an option to using live animals, these should be used by RTOs for practice, if not for assessment
* the number of hours of placement doesn’t necessarily equate to what the students are actually doing relevant to the qualification. Some may spend a lot of time on reception or cleaning cages
* ideally, they would also rotate through different types of workplaces, so they get wide experience in different areas
* some placement clinics don't get exposure to all species and procedures, and students at such clinics are disadvantaged
* specific competencies may closely align with acts of veterinary medicine and, as such, may not currently be legally permissible for veterinary nurses to perform in certain states. These tasks could be taught under clinical simulation (which is an accepted and endorsed form of pedagogy within veterinary medicine); however, being able to assess students during mandatory work placement would prove challenging in an RTO setting under existing legislation
* MWR should be limited to items that need an anesthetised animal or medication administered – such as injections. All other assessment can be done at the RTO in a simulated environment
* strongly support changing from an hours-based assessment to a skills-based approach. We see huge variability in skills of nurses in our clinics, and that is for a variety of reasons, but if we are assessing on skills in the Certificate then this should help close this gap somewhat
* in terms of simulations vs real life, we need to take care not to say that most things can be simulated. Part of being a nurse is being able to read the situation, and work with the team in real time and under pressure. Students need to feel and understand this in their training, and this is not achieved as well via simulation. I do think it has a place, but we need to take care not to allow too much of this to creep in.
* Simulations may be necessary where animal welfare restrictions apply. Such simulations should be recognised as valid assessments.

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| As a result of feedback, the number of hours specified for MWR (i.e. 240 per unit of competency) for assessment has been removed. The requirement for performance to be demonstrated and evidence of performance to be collected in a workplace has, for most, but not all units, been retained. |