Animal & Plant Health Agency

APHA Briefing Note 05/19
Notification of the Outcome of the 2018 OCQ(V) Review

Purpose

1. To notify all OVs of the outcome of the review of the OCQ(V) training qualifications carried out in collaboration with Improve International and the BVA.

Background

2. APHA Briefing Note 15/18 was issued on 8 October 2018 to inform OVs of the OCQ(V) review. OVs were also asked for feedback to inform the review.

3. The following sources of feedback were used to inform the review:

   ● BVA survey results

   ● Improve International training feedback

   ● Feedback from BVA Specialist Divisions (PVS, BSAVA)

   ● Feedback from the Veterinary Defence Society (VDS)

   ● APHA – Survey Monkey results, where views were sought on (a) what OVs considered to be valuable in the current courses, and (b) what they considered should be changed and how.

   ● APHA– direct communications from OVs.

4. Feedback from all sources had many common themes and certain issues were particularly dominant.

5. Recommendations including areas for further review were agreed at a joint meeting with BVA, Improve International and APHA on 23 November 2018. These recommendations have since been approved.

6. The agreed recommendations will be rolled out as soon as practical. Timelines will vary depending on the extent of the work required to implement

them. Some recommendations require further investigation and consultation, for example with course accreditation providers, before finalising.

7. Implementation times will depend on other commitments – notably EU exit work – that must take priority. The majority of this review work will not commence until after EU Exit. However, APHA intend to take all recommendations forward as soon as possible.

Main Issues

Revalidation Intervals

8. These are currently variable between courses and, although the intervals were chosen with good reason on a risk basis when the OCQ qualifications were introduced, a review of the intervals was planned after Grandfather Rights OVs had completed the first revalidation cycle.

9. The OCQ(V) - TT has the shortest interval at two years, although an interim extension of one year has already been implemented. Two years is now widely considered unnecessarily short, particularly given that OVs holding the OCQ(V) - TT are also subject to regular individual audit.

10. Some courses – notably the small animal courses, CA and SX – have a five-year revalidation interval. APHA recognise that Pet Passports and Health Certification are common areas where mistakes are made, often with significant consequences, supported by evidence from the VDS feedback. The revalidation interval must therefore be frequent enough to ensure that OVs update and demonstrate their knowledge to reduce the risk of mistakes.

Revalidation Window

11. Currently OVs only have a two-month window in which they can submit their final declarations, on completion of the course, if they want to set their next revalidation interval from the end of the window. They can complete before the two-month window commences, but if so, the date of the next revalidation will be set from the date of completion, rather than the end of the window.

12. The two-month period is considered restrictive for the following reasons:

- It may fall in a busy period, e.g. spring calving and lambing time is busy for large animal OVs.

- Several OVs in a practice may need to take the qualification over a two-month period, which can be demanding on resources. (However, they can enrol and complete everything except their declarations ahead of this window without altering the next revalidation deadline.)

- Some OVs may need to complete more than one OCQ(V) within the same two-month period.

13. Enrolment and completion deadline dates for all courses were the same date. This led to issues with administration – many OVs left enrolment until close to the completion deadline and were unable to complete in time.

Invigilation Requirements

14. Although some people would like the requirement removed, the majority of respondents to both the BVA and APHA surveys support the principle to complete the online examination in the presence of an invigilator. However, concern was raised over the financial and resource implications of the requirement, especially for OVs working in sole-charge and remote practices. An invigilated exam is a requirement of ESVPS and Harper Adams accreditation.

15. Currently, there is the option for those working in remote practices to complete the online examination in the presence of another professional, such as a doctor or lawyer, but the question was raised about whether alternative options could be more widely available and if other professions could be considered.

Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) Online Examination

16. Many OVs support the MCQ style of online examination but felt that the questions relied heavily on memory. The reality of the job is that OVs refer to Notes for Guidance and other sources of information for support. Although the course syllabus makes reference to this guidance, OVs report that the MCQs rely heavily on memorising information.

17. Currently there is very limited feedback at the end of the examination. Whilst the candidate is immediately informed of the result of pass or fail, they do not get an actual mark or feedback on which questions they answered incorrectly. OVs requested (a) to be given feedback on individual questions to identify knowledge gaps, and (b) to be informed of the required pass mark and their actual result.

18. MCQs should enable OVs to demonstrate how and where to find required information for future reference and discussions highlighted the benefits of having an "open-book" exam. This could have a positive impact on the nature of the questions that could be asked.

19. Some OVs reported errors in some MCQs.

20. Some OVs reported that questions can be very biased towards a particular discipline, e.g. multiple equine questions in the Ungulate course (OCQ(V) - UX), even though question selection is random.

CPD Requirements

21. Despite agreement on the requirement, confusion exists amongst OVs over what constitutes relevant CPD and whether the same CPD can be used across different courses.

22. Several OVs felt that the number of CPD hours required (10 hours per OCQ(V)) was excessive and disproportionate to the course requirements. This was particularly evident for the OCQ(V) – TT, which, until 3 December 2018, had a two-year revalidation interval.

Course Content and Structure

23. Although many OVs liked the basic content and structure of the courses, the majority felt that the volume of material presented was too large. Duplication was particularly evident for those completing multiple courses. An element of flexibility could be introduced to reduce the requirement to complete the same skills across courses.

24. OVs requested the inclusion of more policy information across the courses.

25. Many questioned the relevance of some of the material to their particular area of work. A common request was the removal of equine-related content in the Ungulate course (OCQ(V) - UX), although those in mixed practice wanted the content to remain. The other main request was for a course specific to zoo animals and laboratory animals.

26. Some OVs reported that the course content does not reflect the practical nature of the role being certified. They reported that the training did not teach competence, nor adequately prepare participants for the online examination.

Case Logs

27. Some OVs support the requirement for case logs/scenarios but many felt that case logs were unnecessary and too time consuming to complete, particularly if only doing the work infrequently. Case logs can become repetitive, especially if the same example is applicable across OCQ(V)s. For TB in particular, case logs were considered excessive as APHA can readily access the same information from the individual OV testing records.

28. Case logs are no longer compulsory for any qualification. Scenarios are now used as an alternative to completing case logs and these have been well received to date.

Minimum Animal Numbers for OCQ(V) - TT Revalidation Requirements (not covered in the meeting with BVA/Improve)

29. The current minimum number of cattle to be tested between revalidations is 250.

30. It is considered that this must remain for the initial OCQ(V) qualification but that it is unnecessarily high for revalidation. OVs carrying out low volumes of testing (e.g. zoo vets, remote practices) struggle to meet this requirement. The minimum number set should be what is required to permit effective audit and no more.

Actions following Recommendations

Revalidation Interval

31. Future revalidation intervals will be standardised to four years for all courses in a staged process.

32. For all CA and SX qualifications completed by 30 April 2019, the original five-year revalidation interval will be applied. For those completed from 1 May 2019 the new four-year revalidation will be applied.

33. For all ES and EX qualifications completed by 30 June 2019, the existing five-year revalidation interval will be applied. For those completed from 1 July 2019 the new four-year revalidation will be applied.

34. For all other qualifications, the four-year interval will be applied from 31 January 2019 once the next revalidation (or the main qualification) is completed.

Revalidation Window

35. The revalidation window will be extended to a six-month period prior to the completion deadline date. If completed in this window, the date of the next revalidation would be taken from the deadline date and not the date of completion. In this case an OV could revalidate after 3.5 years meaning that the subsequent actual interval could be as much as 4.5 years. Implementation of this may be slightly later than implementation of the new interval but will follow soon afterwards.

36. The enrolment deadline will be routinely set one month prior to the completion deadline for all courses.

Invigilation Requirements

37. The option of permitting a more flexible invigilator choice for all OVs (to reduce the time and cost burden and assist those working in sole-charge or remote practices) is being further discussed with the course accreditation providers.

38. The use of remote invigilation is being investigated with the course accreditation providers as an option. If implemented this would be in addition to the existing options and not compulsory. The OV would incur an additional cost for this option.

Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) Online Examination

39. All MCQs in all courses will be reviewed to ensure that the questions (a) are accurate, and (b) test the ability to perform the relevant role and are not just a memory test. Where possible this will be done alongside EU Exit course updates currently in progress, or soon thereafter.

40. Candidates will be given more feedback at the end of the MCQ online examination. They will be informed of actual result – not just pass/fail – and be given a list of questions they answered incorrectly. This is being developed but implementation will be dependent on prioritisation of IT updates required for EU Exit work.

41. Consideration will be given to use of time-limited open-book online examination. Improve International are consulting with the course accreditation providers. If it is considered a suitable option then it will require extensive work to set up. If implemented this is not expected to be before 2020, but updates will follow when more information is known.

42. The recommendation is that MCQs with multiple disciplines should be split into sections and questions selected randomly from each section. This would ensure that a disproportionate number of questions on one discipline is not selected (e.g. an excess of equine questions in the Ungulates exam). This option is being investigated and updates will follow.

CPD Requirements

43. The CPD requirement of 10 hours is to be completed over the standardised four-year timeframe.

44. The option to permit the time taken for completion of scenarios to be considered as CPD has been agreed but the details are being discussed with the course accreditation providers. The number of scenarios required is also

being reviewed to assist those completing multiple courses. An update is anticipated by the end of February 2019.

45. Clarification will be added to the training website of what can be considered relevant CPD, including the use of some typical examples for OVs to access.

Course Content and Structure

46. More policy and relevant legislation will be included within the courses and policy changes will be added on an ongoing basis.

47. The initial revalidation qualifications were similar to the main courses to provide those with Grandfather Rights the full training material. These have been (in the case of OCQ(V) - TT) or will be (in the case of all other courses) reviewed following completion of the Grandfather Rights revalidations.

48. Moving forward, other new content and updates will be added every revalidation cycle as a minimum (i.e. every four years) to ensure that new material is incorporated and OVs receive new information as well as the standard material for revision.

49. Revalidation updates will include topics that have been (a) a common subject of OV query or misunderstanding, or (b) reported as a common area for errors.

50. APHA will review all courses – and specifically the export qualifications – to consider:

    a. how the number of courses and topics can be rationalised to meet the needs of OVs specialising in one discipline as well as those covering multiple disciplines.

    b. how to reduce the number of qualifications any OV may require and/or the time spent on revalidating.

    c. how to reduce the content of the courses without losing quality and vital content.

51. The provision of species-specific courses will be considered (e.g. farm animals, laboratory animals, zoo animals) in relation to demand for their inclusion. APHA will work with BVA and relevant BVA specialist divisions as required

52. Points 50 a-c and 51 will require extensive work and may not be fully implemented until the new training contract is implemented in 2020.

53. The Ungulate course (OCQ(V) - UX) will be addressed as a priority. The current course will be maintained at least in the interim but a separate farm animal course will be introduced to give OVs the option of completing one or the other – similar to the case for equine vets currently. It is anticipated that work on this will commence from April 2019 after EU Exit.

54. The incorporation of material from the OCQ(V) - ES (Essential Skills) into other OCQ(V) revalidations to reduce the requirement to revalidate as a stand-alone course is being investigated. In this case the material would be flagged and could be missed out of the training if covered in another recently completed OCQ(V). However, the content would be assessed in all OCQ(V) examinations. The OCQ(V) - ES would still be maintained as a stand-alone course for initial qualification.

Case Logs

55. No change to the current requirements now that scenarios have been introduced.

Minimum Animal Numbers for OCQ(V) - TT Revalidation Requirements (not covered in the meeting with BVA/Improve)

56. The minimum number of animals to be tested between subsequent revalidations will be reduced to 30 animals. This will be implemented from 31 January 2019. The training website has been updated to reflect this.

57. Exemptions from this requirement will be considered only in exceptional circumstances. OV instructions will be updated to reflect this.

Implementation Timelines

Unless otherwise indicated above, the date of implementation of any changes along with further details (where applicable) will be communicated to OVs in future Briefing Notes.

Further Information

https://www.improve-ov.com/home/

APHA OV Team – CSCOneHealthOVTeam@apha.gov.uk

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