

Policy for Authorisation of Food Competent Certifying Officers (FCCO) in Great Britain by APHA

May 2026: Version 2

Change notice

The following changes have been made to Version 2:

- This document has been extensively updated and re-written, please read the new version.

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Definitions

1. For the purposes of this document the following definitions shall apply:

- a. **Agency** means the Animal and Plant Health Agency, an executive agency of Defra.
- b. **Authorisation** means official recognition by the Agency to carry out official export health certification on behalf of Defra and the devolved administration Ministers, as appropriate. Authorisation is denoted by the allocation of a stamp with a unique number and inclusion on the definitive list of Food Competent Certifying Officers (FCCOs), held and managed by the Agency.
- c. **Central Competent Authority (CCA)**, for the purposes of export certification, means Defra and its executive agency, APHA, in relation to any international trade functions for animals and animal products as reserved to the UK Government. It extends to representing the UK and any devolved administration in negotiations relating to animal health and public health certification of imports and exports. However, Central Competent Authority (CCA) also means the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in relation to other matters of animal health and welfare and where they are responsible for the implementation and execution of certification of animal products and animals.
- d. **Competent Authority (CA)** includes the Local Authority (LA) responsible or authorised to implement and enforce food hygiene controls and animal health and welfare legislation, as specified in such legislation.
- e. **Certifying Officer (CO)** - Means any person authorised to sign officially issued export health certificates on behalf of the appropriate CCA.
- f. **Day** means a day in the calendar, including Saturday, Sunday, bank and public holidays.
- g. **Export Certificates** are paper or electronic records, which denote and attest to attributes and the origin(s) of a consignment of goods to which they relate, verified by the person or authority making the record.
- h. **Official Export Health Certificates (EHC)** are export certificates issued by, or under the control of, the exporting country's CCA, including by a certifying body recognised by the CCA to issue such certificates.
- i. **Food Competent Certifying Officer (FCCO)** is a Certifying Officer authorised by the Agency, that has competencies to operate official controls under the Food Safety Act 1990 and means a person deployed by a competent authority, either as staff or otherwise, and who is appropriately qualified to perform official controls and other official activities in accordance with the Official Controls Regulation (2017/625), and any other relevant rules.
- j. **Official Veterinarian** means a Veterinary Surgeon appointed by the Agency to perform specific tasks on behalf of the Agency. A Veterinary Surgeon must hold an OCQ(V) qualification and be a full member of the Royal College of Veterinary

Surgeons (RCVS) to be authorised by the Agency as an OV. Veterinarian and Veterinary Surgeon are interchangeable terms.

- k. **Lead Food Officer** means a person as defined by the relevant Food Law Code of Practice, or equivalent in the case of Food Standards Scotland (FSS).
- l. **Local Authority authorised officer** means a person who has been authorised by a Local Authority (LA) according to the Food Law Code of Practice for the Country in which they are authorised under the applicable Food Safety Act 1990, in the context of their employment or contract and with responsibilities in relation to that LA.
- m. **Notes for Guidance** means official guidance documents issued and specific to an EHC, providing explanation and information to aid and direct the exporter and Certifying Officer in the requirements and the completion of an EHC.
- n. **Official control** means any form of control that any appropriate Competent Authority performs for the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules.
- o. **Official Controls Qualification (OCQ)** means an accredited qualification achieved following training and assessment by a government approved training provider in a particular discipline.
- p. **Products of Animal Origin (POAO)** means products derived from animals for human consumption and includes legally defined living animals ready to be presented to the final consumer for human consumption.
- q. **Revalidation** means the renewal of the OCQ(FCCO) prior to its date of expiry to enable continuation of both the qualification and authorisation
- r. **Revocation** means the withdrawal of authorisation to act as a certifying officer on behalf of the CCA in relation to official export health certification.
- s. **Suspension** means the temporary withdrawal of authorisation to act as a certifying officer on behalf of the CCA in relation to official export health certification, pending the outcome of a specified process and/or action.
- t. **Verification** means checking by examination in person or, if permitted, by deploying a Certification Support Officer (CSO) acting under the direction of the certifier, and considering objective evidence, to determine whether the specified requirements of a certificate have been fulfilled or complied with.
- u. **Working day** means a day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, bank, or a public holiday.

Introduction

2. This Policy sets out the relationship between the Animal and Plant Health Agency (hereafter referred to as 'APHA') and the person authorised as a Food Competent Certifying Officer (FCCO) by APHA. APHA designates FCCOs through this Policy for Authorisation.

3. APHA acts on behalf of the relevant Ministers in England, Scotland and Wales to designate individuals who may then carry out specific tasks in relation to official export certification on behalf of those Ministers.
4. Authorised persons are titled 'FCCO' but may also be referred, alongside Official Veterinarians (OVs), with the generic term as Certifying Officers (CO). A CO may provide official export health certification in relation to products of animal origin (POAO) and composite products as permitted by the country or trading zone of destination and as indicated on the official Export Health Certificate (EHC) for a commodity. Many certificates use the title 'Official Inspector' and this is interchangeable with CO, therefore a CO may sign such certificates
5. Official EHCs are officially negotiated and agreed between the central competent authorities (CCAs) of the trading countries and carry the backing of the state when used to certify exports. A FCCO is not empowered to negotiate an official EHC directly with the CCAs of importing countries and this activity is reserved to Defra on behalf of the UK. Official EHCs have specific requirements and may not be altered by the CO except where this is expressly permitted or required in the Notes for Guidance (NFG) that accompanies the certificate, or as otherwise permitted in writing by the CCA.
6. To facilitate the effective implementation of GB official controls and for the execution of export certification, COs must inspect and certify processes, commodities and consignments. They must take into consideration the specific requirements on the EHC, the NFG that accompany the EHC and the collective knowledge from official control systems in the UK, e.g. rapid alert systems, official disease freedom status and local authority inspections and enforcement, before issuing certification.
7. The FCCO shall operate in accordance with the standards for authorised persons who carry out official controls. These standards are laid down in relevant GB legislation, including retained EU legislation, particularly the Official Controls Regulation 2017/625. The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, formerly OIE) and Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) also set standards for the authorisation and conduct of officials in relation to the certification of animals and animal products and food for international trade. This is detailed in Section 3 of the WOAH's Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Annex II) concerning the quality of veterinary services for member countries and in guideline [CAC/GL 38-2001](#) of the Codex on the issuance and use of official certificates.

Authorisation

8. APHA will authorise as an FCCO any person who:
 - i. Holds a valid OCQ(FCCO) certificate, demonstrating their understanding in relation to delivering export certification on behalf of APHA, *and*
 - ii. Holds a recognised qualification, demonstrating their skills and knowledge to undertake official controls according to the Food Law Code of Practice for the country in which they are authorised to act, namely:

- a. Diploma in Environmental Health awarded by the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS); or
- b. Certificate of Registration as an Environmental Health Practitioner awarded by the Environmental Health Registration Board (EHRB) (including its antecedents and replacement); or
- c. Higher Certificate in Food Control (HCFC) awarded by the Environmental Health Registration Board (EHRB); or
- d. Higher Certificate in Official Control (HCOC) awarded by the Scottish Food Safety Officer's Registration Board (SFSORB); or
- e. Higher Certificate in Food Practice awarded by the Scottish Food Safety Officer's Registration Board (SFSORB); or
- f. Advanced Professional Certificate in Food Hygiene and Standards Control awarded by CIEH (Chartered Institute of Environmental Health); or
- g. Other qualification deemed to be equivalent by their recognized Professional Body (Annex I).

and

iii. Is employed or contractually engaged by either:

- a. a Local Authority in GB and authorised according to the Food Law Code of Practice, for the inspection and execution of official food hygiene controls and deemed competent to carry out the role of FCCO; *or*
- b. Food Standards Scotland (FSS) and deemed competent to carry out the role of FCCO;

and

iv. Has had their contact email address and eligibility criteria verified to APHA by their Lead Food Officer;

and

v. Is regarded by APHA as suitable for carrying out tasks on behalf of Ministers, taking into account any previous performance as an official.

9. By exception APHA may also decide to authorise persons based on relevant previous experience, training and performance, on a case-by-case basis and in direct discussion with the responsible Lead Food Officer.

10. Applicants and authorised FCCOs must report any criminal convictions to APHA immediately. The Agency will then consider whether the FCCO authorisation can continue.

11. Once authorised, the FCCO shall be included in the definitive list of officially authorised COs on the AHP database that is managed by the Agency's OV team.

12. At no time shall a FCCO be considered an Agency member of staff or an employee of the CCA.
13. For new applicants, once OCQ(FCCO) training has been successfully completed and the FCCO provided with their certification from the training provider, the Agency will complete the authorisation process and the successful applicant will receive the following:
 - i. FCCO authorisation by email notification via the training provider
 - ii. FCCO Stamp and Terms and Conditions of Use – for use only on official EHCs issued by APHA for export certification (where NFGs indicate these may be signed by an FCCO) and supporting attestations within the UK to other Certifying Officers. The stamp shall bear a unique number assigned to that FCCO. The FCCO must stamp their assigned number where indicated on official EHCs and for any permitted alterations and deletions on the certificate
 - iii. A unique identifier number on authorisation
14. The training certificate issued by the training provider alone does not provide authorisation to act as a FCCO. Authorisation is granted by the Agency on issuance of the email notification referred to in paragraph 13.
15. Such authorisation shall be made within ten working days of obtaining the OCQ(CO) - FCCO certificate, providing all other requirements have been met.
16. Applicants must not act as a FCCO until they have received their authorisation letter and official stamp.
17. An FCCO authorisation is not a guarantee or representation by the Agency of the amount and nature of the work required to be performed as an FCCO.
18. Where an electronic signature is required to be affixed to an authorised document, the signature provided by the FCCO at the time of registration with the training provider and which is maintained on the personal training dashboard relating to that FCCO shall be used. Changes of name must be updated on the training record without delay.
19. The Agency will only supply critical materials such as FCCO stamps and Export Certificates to FCCOs who are authorised for the relevant task. It is important to remember that the stamp is and remains, the property of APHA. APHA will instruct the destruction of any stamps if a FCCO is removed from the authorised list.
20. All official communication to an individual in relation to authorised status will be via the email address that is registered by the FCCO on the training provider's database. It is a condition of the authorisation that this email address must be kept up to date.
21. If such circumstance arises that an FCCO wishes to move from one Local Authority's employment to another, their FCCO authorised status will stay with them, as long as all conditions for authorisation are met. Similarly, FCCOs can work temporarily for a different LA at the agreement of both LAs involved. The FCCO must notify APHA of the move which must be confirmed by the Lead Food Officer at the new LA. The FCCO can continue to use their existing stamp while working for the new LA. Moves between FSS and LA will be assessed on a case by case basis, subject to meeting specific requirements.

Revalidation

22. Once a new applicant or authorised FCCO has completed the OCQ(FCCO) course for the first time, they will be required to revalidate their authorisation every four years from the date of the successful completion of the training.
23. If the FCCO's revalidation is not completed before the expiry of the four year period, the authorisation will be suspended. The FCCO has the option to revalidate the qualification at any time during the six month period immediately following the deadline to have the authorisation reinstated.
24. Failure to complete the revalidation within the six month period following the deadline will result in expiry of the authorisation.
25. The training provider will notify the FCCO of the completion deadline for the revalidation and will send reminders to the registered email address, prior to the deadline date and again prior to the expiry date of the OCQ.
26. The FCCO may have their authorisation revalidated in the following circumstances without a break in their authorisation:
 - i. before the expiry of the authorisation period the FCCO may undertake the revalidation training and obtain a certificate confirming that retraining from the training provider
 - ii. if this revalidation is completed within the specified window for revalidation the start date of the next period of the authorisation shall be the original revalidation deadline
 - iii. if revalidation takes place prior to that window, the start date of the new period of authorisation shall be from the date of the certificate of completion issued by the training provider
 - iv. if revalidation takes place during the six month period of suspension, the start date of the new period of authorisation shall be from the date of the certificate of completion issued by the training provider.
27. Agency records shall be updated accordingly.
28. If an FCCO's authorisation has expired, the FCCO will need to complete the full OCQ training or apply to the Agency for permission to revalidate outside of the deadline. The Agency retains the right to grant or refuse permission based on the reasons provided for the request.
29. If a FCCO is unsuccessful in obtaining revalidation, then there will be an opportunity to retake the revalidation qualification again on two occasions. Following three unsuccessful attempts it will be necessary to take the full qualification again to seek reauthorisation as a FCCO.
30. Spot check audits (internal verification) will be carried out by the training provider on behalf of APHA to ensure that the information being submitted at revalidation is correct and compliant. This will occur on an ongoing basis so it will not delay the revalidation process.

31. Failure to comply with revalidation requirements may result in suspension or revocation of the authorisation and depending on the circumstances, a formal investigation may be triggered.

Performance of tasks

32. Authorised FCCOs will act on behalf of the CCA when carrying out official export health certification, which must follow an EHC application by an exporting business. COs may not use their FCCO authorisation status, number and stamp for any other accreditation, attestation or declaration that they may make personally, professionally or on behalf of their LA, whether in the context of compliance with Food Hygiene regulatory requirements or not. FCCOs providing supporting attestations to other COs (either OVs or other FCCOs), which rely on their authorisation status as an FCCO, must therefore do so in only their capacity as an authorised CO employed by the LA or FSS, and not in any personal capacity or as a private contractual agreement.

33. APHA will not supply any materials necessary for the performance of the FCCO role other than the issuing of an official stamp.

34. APHA will monitor the performance of all COs that it has authorised as it sees fit through a range of checks and inspection activities including, but not limited to:

- i. Analysis of data and copies of export certificates and supporting documentation
- ii. Investigation of complaints or observations, in particular, from officials at border control posts and reports from CCAs in importing countries.

35. To facilitate the checks and inspections carried out by the CCA and trade audits conducted by trading partners, FCCOs are required to provide certified copies of EHCs and/or supporting documentation and evidence as requested by the CCA. These must be provided by the deadline stated in the written request, unless there are exceptional circumstances that prevent this. In exceptional circumstances, an extension may be granted. Failure to provide the requested information by the deadline may result in suspension of the FCCO's authorisation.

Acting in an official capacity

36. Export related information, additions and amendments may be issued as necessary, and it is essential that FCCOs refer to the latest information on gov.uk. It is the FCCO's responsibility to be up to date with all aspects relevant to their authorisation.

37. FCCOs are expected to monitor the email address they have registered with the training provider who administers training on behalf of APHA. This is to ensure they maintain awareness of updates and changes to aspects of the work relevant to individual controls and receive notifications relating to their training and authorisation status. FCCOs must therefore ensure that their contact details registered with the training provider are kept up to date.

38. FCCOs must keep up to date with any revisions to the Guidance on Export Certification.
39. FCCOs have responsibility for the security of all information obtained in the course of their duties, whether documentary, oral, pictorial, digital, or printed. All such data is considered personal and commercially sensitive data and may not be disclosed unless authorised under applicable sections of the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. The unlawful disclosure of protected data shall be grounds for suspension or revocation of authorisation.
40. FCCOs must abide by the standards set out in the applicable Food Law Code of Practice (as applicable for the country in which the certification is undertaken), official communications whether direct or indirect and the NFGs issued with each EHC. Where a batch of certificates are held, the NFGs must be checked online for changes before issuing each certificate.
41. FCCOs must act without conflict of interest. This requirement underpins all official activities and reflects UK and international requirements. FCCOs should consider potential conflicts of interest and discuss with their Lead Food Safety Officer to decide whether a conflict exists. In cases where questions over conflict of interest remain, the FCCO must refer to APHA for further consideration and advice. FCCOs should make a record of any potential conflict of interest and the advice received.

Revocation of authorisation

42. The authorisation of a FCCO may be revoked for several reasons. These include, but are not limited to, where the FCCO:
 - i. No longer meets the criteria that allow them to be authorised by APHA described in paragraph 8 *or*
 - ii. Voluntarily requests their authorisation to be revoked, giving one week's notice in writing or by email to APHA from their registered address; *or*
 - iii. Is subject to the final decision of a review panel or appeal outcome following any investigative process; *or*
 - iv. Is convicted of a criminal offence that renders them unfit to be a FCCO.
43. If a FCCO has their authorisation revoked for any of the above reasons, APHA will send a notification by email to their registered email address or office address giving full reasons for the action taken. The FCCO has a right of appeal against this decision as set out the appeals section of this Policy.
44. Stamps must be permanently destroyed or returned to APHA when authorisation is revoked.
45. In cases where concerns arise about the conduct of a FCCO, APHA will not revoke the FCCO's authorisation without first carrying out an investigation.
46. The Lead Food Officer and LA of employment (or FSS) will be kept informed of all proceedings.

Suspension of authorisation

47. A FCCO's authorisation will be suspended automatically if they do not complete the required revalidation by the deadline date – see paragraphs 23 to 26 above.
48. A FCCO can voluntarily suspend their authorisation at any time giving APHA one week's notice of their intention to suspend. Notice must be provided in writing or by email to the APHA OV Team.
49. The authorisation of a FCCO may be suspended as a precautionary measure if the Veterinary Head of OV Regulatory Affairs or any Senior Veterinary Manager (not below Grade 6) in England, Scotland or Wales consider it necessary for the following reasons:
- i. If a preliminary report is made by any party that APHA considers serious enough to warrant an investigation, authorisation status may be suspended until such time as the investigation process is completed and the authorisation is restored or revoked, as the case may be;
 - ii. If APHA becomes aware of an investigation by a statutory body into the conduct of a FCCO and where such investigation concerns animal health, animal welfare, public health, acts of fraud or dishonesty or violence, which could affect the safe and effective performance of the FCCO or bring APHA or the responsible Minister into disrepute;
 - iii. If there is evidence to suggest the FCCO is unable to undertake the safe and effective performance of their FCCO duties due to physical or mental impairment;
 - iv. If, in APHA's opinion, a FCCO infringes or fails to comply with official instructions or consistently performs official tasks unsatisfactorily;
 - v. In case of a breach of any requirement provided for in this policy, such as unlawful disclosure of data.
 - vi. Any other circumstance provided for in this policy.
50. Precautionary suspension of a FCCO's authorisation will be initiated by the Veterinary Head of OV Regulatory Affairs or any Senior Veterinary Manager (not below Grade 6) for England, Scotland or Wales and a letter of suspension will be sent to the FCCO concerned. The letter will either be sent by email or by recorded delivery. The letter will set out the grounds for the suspension and a date of commencement of the suspension. A copy of the letter will be sent to the Veterinary Head of OV Regulatory Affairs if it was not issued by them.
51. The letter will also remind the FCCO to stop all activities related to being a FCCO. Copies of all documents will be sent to the APHA OV Team and the Regulatory Affairs, Compliance and Enforcement (RACE) Team.
52. Where APHA has cause for concern over the conduct of a FCCO but does not believe that there are grounds for suspension during the investigation, the FCCO may continue to provide FCCO services during the investigation.

53. In exceptional cases, rather than suspend the authorisation for the reasons given in paragraph 49 above, the Agency may decide to allow the FCCO to continue with their authorisation but stipulate they must only carry out the role under the supervision of a named supervisor whilst the investigation is in progress.
54. The authorisation of a FCCO may also be suspended subject to the final decision of a review panel or appeal outcome of any investigation where the panel considers that:
- the FCCO may not be competent or may not perform their tasks to the required standards
 - the FCCO has infringed or failed to comply with the conditions of authorisation
 - the FCCO is guilty of conduct which makes suspension of the authorisation desirable in APHA's interest or in the public interest
55. Suspension of authorisation following a review panel decision will usually be for a set period of time and reinstatement may be subject to other conditions being met.
56. A FCCO whose authorisation is suspended shall not continue to exercise the role of an authorised FCCO. The suspended person must surrender their stamp to their Lead Food Officer or the Agency, in person or by recorded delivery, until such time as any investigation process is completed and authorisation is restored or revoked, as the case may be.
57. The Lead Food Officer and LA of employment (or FSS) will be kept informed of all proceedings.

Investigation

58. Investigations pursuant to any potential breach of the terms of this Policy for the Authorisation of a Food Competent Certifying Officer (FCCO) shall be conducted in accordance with the following:
- i. A sole investigator, who is an employee of APHA and a Grade 6 or Grade 7 Senior Veterinary Manager or an employee of the FSS or LA with equivalent seniority, will be appointed by the Veterinary Head of OV Regulatory Affairs or delegated Senior Veterinary Manager to carry out an investigation without unreasonable delay.
 - ii. The Agency shall notify the FCCO in writing of the terms of the allegation and request a relevant account from the FCCO in writing or in person. Such notification shall be sent to the FCCO's registered email address.
 - iii. An investigation would normally include a meeting with the FCCO to enable them to present further evidence and explanation. However, in some cases the investigator may decide that this is not necessary. For example, in cases where the investigation concludes without doubt that the allegations cannot be upheld or the facts are beyond dispute (e.g. following admission in writing by the FCCO or following a legal conviction).
 - iv. The FCCO shall be given a minimum of five working days' notice of the interview, which will usually be undertaken remotely using APHA security compliant options or may be undertaken face to face.

- v. Interviews will be recorded and the recording will be retained for two years from either the date that the investigation outcome letter is sent to the FCCO or the outcome of an appeal letter is sent to the FCCO, whichever is the latter. Recordings will be made available to the FCCO on request. Transcripts of the recordings will be retained for ten years from the same start points.
 - vi. If the FCCO wishes, they may be accompanied by one person¹ to any interview at their own expense. The FCCO must notify the investigator of the attendance and details of their companion no later than 72 hours before the appointed date of interview.
 - vii. The FCCO may consult with their companion during the meeting. The companion does not have the right to answer questions on the FCCO's behalf, address the meeting if the FCCO does not wish it, or prevent the investigator from explaining the case.
 - viii. APHA will treat all reports and other documents as confidential except that they may be shared with any other statutory body with a legitimate interest where such disclosure is authorised under relevant data protection or other legislation or if criminal action or intent is evident or suspected.
59. The investigator may interview such parties as they consider fit and shall make reasonable attempts to interview persons suggested by the FCCO who are considered to be relevant to the allegation made. Should the investigator fail to interview parties suggested by the FCCO, the investigator shall give reason for such failure in any report produced.
60. The FCCO shall cooperate with any reasonable request to assist the investigation, including the production of documents or attendance at an interview. Failure to comply will be considered as grounds for immediate suspension or revocation of authorisation.
61. In cases where the investigation identifies, at any stage, evidence of non-compliance with instructions or with the standards in this Policy or of alleged misconduct, a Senior Veterinary Manager (not below Grade 6) can suspend the FCCO's authorisation before the investigation is complete until the review panel has come to its decision. In such cases, the investigation will be completed, and a review will be conducted without unreasonable delay by the Agency.
62. If, at any point, the investigator uncovers further issues that fall outside of the allegations stated in the letter of notification or any updates thereof, consideration will be given as to whether additional allegations must be added. If so, the FCCO will be notified of the new allegations in writing as soon as possible.
63. The FCCO will be given a draft of the investigator's report by email and invited to correct any factual errors or to make any relevant comments. The FCCO will have 14 calendar days to do this and will be expected to respond by email to the person appointed to receive such communication. Upon request, the Agency may grant extra time to the FCCO to review the report if there is reasonable justification provided the request is received in writing before the expiry of the 14 calendar day period.

¹ This may be any person to accompany the FCCO and can be a Union representative or their Lead Food Officer.

64. The investigator may decide that there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the alleged misconduct and recommend to the Veterinary Head of OV Regulatory Affairs or other Senior Veterinary Manager that the case is closed. If the Veterinary Head of OV Regulatory Affairs or Senior Veterinary Manager agrees, either they or the investigator will write to the FCCO informing them of this.
65. The final report shall be forwarded to a review panel, other than where the case is closed as in paragraph 64 above.
66. The Lead Food Officer and LA of employment (or FSS) will be kept informed of all proceedings.

Decision of the Review Panel

67. A review panel will be appointed by the Veterinary Head of OV Regulatory Affairs or delegated Senior Veterinary Manager comprising two members, at least one of whom shall be an Agency MRCVS of Grade 6 and the other an official permanently employed by either APHA, FSS or LA at a suitable level of seniority (equivalent Grade SEO or above). The investigator will not be a member of the review panel.
68. A member of the review panel will invite the FCCO to a review panel meeting, which will usually be carried out remotely but may be carried out face to face. The FCCO will be given at least five working days' notice of the date of the meeting. The FCCO will be invited to make representations and given the opportunity to present any relevant mitigating factors. No expenses will be payable to the FCCO for attendance at this meeting.
69. The FCCO may be accompanied by one person of their choice at the review panel meeting but the cost of their companion attending the meeting will be at their expense. The FCCO must notify the member of the review panel who invited them to the meeting, that they will be accompanied, providing details of the companion no later than 72 hours before the appointed date of the meeting.
70. The review panel shall consider the investigator's report as well as any representations made by the FCCO at the hearing or in writing, when making their deliberations.
71. The review panel may decide on one or more of the following outcomes in proportion to their findings:
 - i. The panel finds in favour of the FCCO, and no further action is required or, if they were suspended, their authorisation is restored;
 - ii. Written advice given to the FCCO;
 - iii. Retraining at the FCCO's expense;
 - iv. Requirement for an improvement or action plan to be provided by the FCCO;
 - v. Suspension (or further suspension) of APHA authorisation;
 - vi. Revocation of authorisation for a period of up to five years;

- v. If applicable, referral to a relevant professional or membership body, where there are grounds for concerns as to professional conduct;
 - vi. Additional conditions such as undergoing retraining, or working under the direct supervision of a named Lead Food Officer or named FCCO for a specified period of time;
 - vii. Invalidation of relevant output where the review panel is sufficiently concerned that the FCCO has not acted appropriately in performing the specific task;
 - viii. Referral to the police if there is evidence that fraudulent or criminal acts may have been committed;
 - ix. Any other reasonable action that APHA considers necessary, including disclosure of their findings to the employer of the FCCO.
72. In determining the outcome of the investigation, the review panel will consider previous training, performance and conduct as well as the facts of the specific case. Any records from the previous ten years will be reviewed. Professional misconduct and intentional or repeated non-compliance with FCCO procedures would justify a long period of suspension or revocation of authorisation.
73. If the review panel decides that it is necessary to revoke the authorisation of a FCCO and there has been a similar incident within the previous five years, then they will normally decide on refusal to authorise for five years from the date of the decision.
74. The review panel will normally make a decision and report the findings and decision to the FCCO in a letter sent to their registered email address or by recorded delivery within five working days of the review panel meeting.
75. A copy of the letter detailing the decision will be sent to the APHA OV Team, Veterinary Head of OV Regulatory Affairs, relevant Local Authority (or FSS as appropriate), Veterinary Director and APHA Regulatory Affairs, Compliance and Enforcement (RACE) Team.
76. A copy of the letter detailing the decision will also be sent to the investigator of the case, the regional Senior Veterinary Lead (G6 or above) in the region in which the FCCO is registered as working and the Veterinary Head of International Trade. This will only be sent once the period of appeal as detailed in paragraphs 80 to 85 has passed and no appeal has been raised. If an appeal is raised, they will not be notified until the appeal has been decided.
77. An APHA Governance Board will review all cases at least annually.
78. If authorisation is suspended or revoked and the allegation raises concerns over the validity of the OCQ(FCCO) qualification, the training provider will be notified so that they can consider the status of the qualification that the FCCO has obtained.
79. The review panel will notify the Lead Food Officer and LA of employment (or FSS), as registered on the FCCO's training record, of the outcome.

Appeals

80. Appeals are permitted on the following grounds:

- if procedural errors are suspected
- if new information/evidence is presented that may change the outcome of the original decision

81. Appeals to the final decision of the review panel shall be conducted as follows:

- i. The appeal must be in writing and addressed to the APHA Veterinary Director; and sent by either email:

[APHA Corporate Correspondence@apha.gov.uk](mailto:APHA_Corporate_Correspondence@apha.gov.uk)

or

Corporate Correspondence
APHA Weybridge
Woodham Lane
New Haw
Addlestone
Surrey
KT15 3NB

- ii. It must be received within 28 calendar days of the date of the review panel's written communication detailing their findings and the outcome; and
- iii. It must set out the grounds for appeal and include any relevant evidence.

82. The Veterinary Director may within 28 calendar days decide the appeal or on receipt of the appeal immediately appoint a Senior Veterinary Manager (not below Grade 6) who has not previously been involved in the case to decide the appeal on their behalf. The appointed person will have 28 calendar days to decide the appeal.

83. Where the FCCO's authorisation has been suspended or revoked then this will continue during the 28 calendar day period allowed for lodging an appeal and whilst the appeal is being considered.

84. The decision of the Veterinary Director, or the person appointed by them, at appeal is final regarding the authorisation.

85. The Lead Food Officer and LA of employment (or FSS) will be kept informed of all proceedings.

Restoration of authorisation

86. If authorisation has been suspended or revoked and the review panel or appeals decision permits restoration of authorisation, then the authorisation will be restored to the extent that their authorisation is still valid.

87. When a FCCO has had their authorisation revoked as a result of an investigation and a review panel decides that they can reapply for their authorisation at the end of the period set (maximum five years), their application for re-authorisation has to be reviewed and approved by the Veterinary Director who will consider if following the period of removal they are now fit to be a FCCO.

88. Where a FCCO has been suspended pending investigation and the review panel decides that there is no case to answer then their authorisation will be reinstated automatically without referral to the Veterinary Director.

Cessation of authorisation

Resignation

89. If a FCCO resigns from authorisation a written or email confirmation must be sent to the Agency. If the FCCO decides to resume FCCO work, reapplication for authorisation will be required.

Retirement

90. If a FCCO intends to retire and no further work is to be carried out on behalf of the Agency they must provide written or email notification to the Agency.

Death of FCCO during appointment

91. Upon notification that a FCCO has died the Agency will:

- update the Agency list of authorised officers and
- request that the Official Stamp is returned or seek assurance that it has been destroyed.

Annex I: Recognised Professional Bodies

England and Wales	Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH)
Scotland	Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS)

Annex II: WOAH Terrestrial Animal Health Code

Section 3. Quality of Veterinary Services

Chapter 3.1 Veterinary Services Article 3.1.1.

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The same fundamental principles should apply in countries where the responsibility for establishing or applying certain animal health or animal welfare measures, or issuing some international veterinary certificates, is exercised by an organisation other than the

Veterinary Services, or by an authority or agency on behalf of the Veterinary Services. In all cases, the Veterinary Services retain ultimate responsibility for the application of these principles.

These fundamental principles are presented in Article 3.1.2. [of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code].



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- <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/about/personal-information-charter>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-and-plant-health-agency-privacy-notices>

APHA is an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and also works on behalf of the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Food Standards Agency to safeguard animal and plant health for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy.