Policy for Authorisation of Official Veterinarians (OVs) in Great Britain
Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
<th>Paragraphs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>3 - 4</td>
<td>1 (a-t)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4 - 5</td>
<td>2 - 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorisation</td>
<td>5 - 7</td>
<td>8 - 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revalidation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20 - 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revalidation of OCQ(V) TT</td>
<td>7 - 8</td>
<td>28 - 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision of Approved TB Testers ATTs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32 - 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance of Tasks</td>
<td>8 - 9</td>
<td>38 - 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment and Quality Assurance</td>
<td>9 - 11</td>
<td>48 - 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revocation of Authorisation</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>60 - 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension of Authorisation</td>
<td>11 - 12</td>
<td>64 - 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>75 - 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision of Review Panel</td>
<td>14 - 15</td>
<td>81 - 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeals</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>90 - 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restoration of Authorisation</td>
<td>15 - 16</td>
<td>94 - 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cessation of Authorisations</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resignations</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of OV whilst Authorised</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Definitions

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

   a. **Agency** means the Animal and Plant Health Agency the Competent Authority for the purposes of this authorisation and relevant legislation.

   b. **Approved Assessor** means an Official Veterinarian (OV) employed by the training provider who is responsible for carrying out the practical assessment of tuberculin skin testing by conditionally authorised OVs and ATTs. This is required prior to being granted full authorisation under the OCQ(V) - TT or OCQ(AHP) - ATT qualifications.

   c. **Approved Tuberculin Tester (ATT)** means a non-veterinarian appointed by the Agency in England but who does not work as an employee of the Agency who holds the OCQ(AHP) - ATT certificate permitting them to perform skin TB testing of cattle in England not applicable in Scotland or Wales.

   d. **Approved Veterinary Supervisor (AVS)** means a Veterinary Surgeon appointed by the Agency who holds the OCQ(V) - TT qualification, who has audited evidence of no breaches in their tuberculosis skin testing work in the two years prior to this appointment and is who is confirmed as Primary Supervisor for an ATT.

   e. **Authorisation** means permission granted by the Agency to a veterinary surgeon to carry out the OV role for the relevant OCQ(V) qualification following successful completion of the relevant training, examination and where required, a practical assessment.

   f. **Certification** means the act of being awarded a certificate of competence after completing the relevant OCQ(V) qualification following completion of an approved course of study and passing the final assessment offered by an approved training provider.

   g. **Conditional Authorisation means** the limited permission granted by the Agency to a Veterinary Surgeon who has successfully completed the theory component of the OCQ(V) TT training provided by the approved training provider to carry out bovine TB testing. A conditional OCQ(V) - TT certificate will be issued. Such limited approval is granted for a six month period and may not be converted to full authorisation until successful completion of a practical assessment.

   h. **Day** means a day in the calendar, including Saturday, Sunday, bank and public holidays.

   i. **Grandfather Rights** means authorisation granted for a specified duration to OVs without the need to complete the OCQ(V) qualifications. In June 2014 OV training was replaced by the Official Control Qualifications (Veterinarian) (OCQ(V)). All OVs authorised as OVs or LVIs under the previous system enabling them to complete work on behalf of APHA were entitled to apply for grandfather rights in the new corresponding OCQ(V)s.

   j. **Official Controls** means any form of control that the Competent Authority performs for the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules.
k. **Official Controls Qualifications (Veterinary) (OCQ(V))** means an accredited qualification achieved following training and assessment by a government approved training provider in a particular veterinary discipline. The qualification is awarded to a Veterinary Surgeon upon successful completion of the qualifying assessment.

l. **Official Veterinarian (OV)** 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.

m. **Revalidation** means the renewal of the relevant OCQ(V) qualification prior to its date of expiry to enable continuation of both the qualification and authorisation.

n. **Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)** means the regulatory body for Veterinary Surgeons in the United Kingdom. It is responsible for monitoring the educational, ethical and clinical standards of the veterinary profession.

o. **Senior Veterinary Manager** is a Veterinary Surgeon directly employed by the Agency at either Grade 7 or Grade 6.

p. **Training Provider** means the supplier contracted by the Agency for the provision of OV training and assurance.

q. **Veterinary Delivery Partners (VDPs)** means the suppliers contracted by the Agency to deliver veterinary work on its behalf. VDPs can deliver the work through subcontracted veterinary practices.

r. **Veterinary Director** is the Head of the Veterinary Profession in the Agency.


t. **Working day** means a day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, bank, or a public holiday.

**Introduction**

2. This Policy for Authorisation of Official Veterinarians (OVs) replaces and amends the previous version dated 13 July 2015 which itself replaced the Memorandum of Conditions of Appointment of Local Veterinary Inspectors by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (August 1994 as revised in April 2014). It is the guidance with respect to the authorisation of OVs to act on behalf of Ministers. It sets out the working relationship between the Agency which acts on behalf of the relevant Ministers in England, Scotland and Wales, and OVs who seek to carry out tasks on behalf of those Ministers and who are not employees of Government.

3. In order to implement official controls which require Veterinary Inspector (VI) powers such as anthrax investigations, OVs may be asked to act under official direction from an Agency VI. Some OVs may be appointed by Ministers under the Animal Health Act 1981 to act as a VI for the duration of a disease outbreak or to provide APHA with resources in remote areas.
4. The standards for authorisation of those who carry out Official Controls or Official Tasks which implement EU legislation for animal health and animal welfare are laid down in Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and welfare rules ("OFFC Regulation"). This Regulation is directly applicable law in Great Britain.

5. The OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) sets similar standards for authorisation of OVs for the certification of animals and animal products for international trade. This is detailed in Chapter 3 of the OIE’s Terrestrial Animal Health Code concerning the quality of veterinary services.

6. In certain domestic legislation, notably dealing with tuberculin skin testing, the term used in law is ‘Approved’ Veterinary Surgeon rather than ‘Authorised’ Official Veterinarian. In this document ‘Authorised’ includes ‘Approved’ whenever applicable.

7. Future legislative changes, government policy or other factors may necessitate a revision of the conditions. In the event of a revision, OVs will be informed and should an OV not wish to continue the on the revised terms, the authorisation can be terminated by mutual consent.

Authorisation

8. Official Controls Qualifications (Veterinary) (OCQ(V)) are accredited qualifications achieved following training and assessment by the training provider.

9. The Agency will authorise as an OV any person who:

   • is a Member or Fellow of the RCVS (MRCVS or FRCVS); and
   • has gained one or more relevant OCQ(V)s demonstrating their competence to undertake the specific OV activities; and
   • is regarded by the Agency as a suitable person to carry out tasks on behalf of Ministers, taking into account any previous performance as an official or veterinary surgeon.

10. In order to carry out tuberculin skin testing in England, Wales or Scotland under the relevant TB Orders, OVs must complete the OCQ(V) - TT qualification. Unlike the other OCQ(V) qualifications, authorisation is a two-stage process:

   • Conditional Authorisation is granted following successful completion of the OCQ(V) - TT theory training, nomination of a supervisor and pending a practical assessment. The issuance of Conditional Authorisation by the Agency can take up to ten working days from completion of the theory course. Conditional Authorisation is granted for a six-month period and cannot be converted to full authorisation until successful completion of a practical assessment.

   • an OV with Conditional Authorisation is permitted to carry out TB skin testing under the direction of an OV with the OCQ(V) - TT who has already been authorised. Once an OV has been granted Conditional Authorisation access to the Agency IT system for recording of bovine TB skin test results will be granted and retained through the length of the Conditional Authorisation. Access will stop if the Conditional Authorisation does not proceed to full authorisation.

   • Authorisation will be issued on completing a practical assessment with satisfactory results within six months of the award of Conditional Authorisation. The practical assessment is conducted by the approved training provider.
• if an OV is unable to complete their practical assessment within six months the authorisation should be revoked or they should apply for an extension giving valid reasons for the extension

• if an extension is applied for then the case should be escalated to a Senior Veterinary Managers for their consideration and an extension will be extended in exceptional circumstances if there are valid reasons

• if the OV have ignored the reminders sent to them by the training provider. The Conditional Authorisation will be revoked two weeks after the end of the assessment deadline

11. Once OCQ(V) training has been successfully completed and the OV provided with their certification from the training provider the Agency will complete the authorisation process and send the successful Veterinary Surgeon the following:

• OV Authorisation letter which will be copied to the veterinary practice with whom they are employed or one or more practices where employment is current

• OV Stamp and Terms and Conditions of Use - for use only on official documents such as TB test charts and Export Health Certificates

12. The training certificate issued by the training provider alone does not provide authorisation to act as an OV. Authorisation is granted by the Agency on issuance of the letter referred to in paragraph 10.

13. Veterinary Surgeons cannot and must not act, as an OV until they have received their Authorisation letter and official stamp. An OV authorisation is not a guarantee or representation by the Agency of the amount and nature of the work required to be performed as an OV.

14. An OV will be issued with a unique identifier number which links their employment record to the practice that employs them. It is the responsibility of the OV to keep their employment details up to date with the training provider.

15. An authorised OV, whether employed or attached as a locum to one or more veterinary practices must notify the Agency in writing by email if they change their practice of employment or start a new contract assignment. The authorisation remains valid if the OV moves between practices until such authorisation expires or is suspended or revoked for some other reason.

16. When an OV with the OCQ(V) - TT is working as a locum they must notify the Agency OV Team of all practices that they work for so that their Sam record can be updated. The OV Team will need to add identifiers for each individual practice that the OV works for so that tests can be assigned and the correct practice is paid for the work.

17. Where an electronic signature is required to be affixed to an authorised document, the signature provided by the OV at the time of registration with the training provider and which is maintained on the personal training dashboard relating to that OV shall be used. Changes of name should be notified to the OV Team immediately.

18. The Agency will only supply critical materials such as OV stamps, tuberculin, PETS passports, DNA tags and Export Certificates to OVs who are authorised for the relevant task. It is important to remember that the stamp is and remains, the property APHA. We will recover it from OV’s who are removed from the authorised list.
19. Once authorised the OV will be required to revalidate at the appropriate revalidation cycle in order to retain their OCQ(V)s.

Revalidation

20. OV authorisation shall last for a specified period from the date of authorisation. If the OV’s revalidation is not completed before the expiry of that period the authorisation will be revoked.

21. The OV may have their authorisation revalidated in the following circumstances without a break in their authorisation:

- the training provider will notify the OV of the completion deadline for the revalidation and send reminders, prior to the expiry date of each OCQ(V). Before the expiry of the authorisation period the OV may retrain and obtain a certificate confirming that retraining from the training provider
- 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 expiry date
- if revalidation takes place prior to that window, the start date of the new period of authorisation shall be from the date of certification

22. Agency records shall be updated accordingly.

23. If revalidation is not completed by the revalidation deadline, the OV will need to complete the full OCQ(V) training, including any required practical assessment 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.

24. It is a requirement to hold the relevant current OCQ(V)s in order to operate as an OV, therefore the OV’s Authorisation will expire with the expiration of the related OCQ(V) and OVs will be unable to carry out OV work unless requalification is completed.

25. Authorisation as an OV for any area of work may require the OV to obtain more than one OCQ(V) qualification. Where this is a requirement, revalidation of all the required qualifications is necessary for the authorisation to continue. Failure to revalidate any of the required qualifications by the revalidation deadline will result in revocation of the Authorisation, unless requalification is completed for all relevant OCQ(V)s.

26. For OVs with ‘Grandfather Rights’ for any qualification, the revalidation date is set from 1 April 2015, regardless of when they registered. All ‘Grandfather Rights’ will expire by 30 June 2019 when all OVs with these rights should have completed revalidation or their authorisation will have expired.

27. If an OV is unsuccessful in obtaining revalidation, then there will be an opportunity to retake the revalidation qualification on two occasions before having to take the full qualification again.

Revalidation of OCQ(V) - TT

28. On revalidation of the OCQ(V) - TT, OVs will also be asked to confirm that they have had a successful VDP or Agency audit in the revalidation interval. This confirmation is part of the declaration the OV completes to finalise their revalidation. OVs are not required to provide evidence of an audit to the training provider but should retain this information for the
Agency who may request it at any time. If the OV has not had an audit in the revalidation cycle they may request a Peer Review from a colleague.

29. An OV is responsible for complying with the audit requirements and for notifying the audit providers in England and Wales this will be the VDP’s audit provider. On occasions APHA audits are carried out on OVs. In Scotland if the OV is unable to have a Peer Review then they should contact APHA and they need to notify test arrange date only, time and tester name only needed if they require an APHA audit to revalidate.

30. Failure to comply with audit requirements will result in suspension of Authorisation until a successful audit is completed. During suspension no OV work under the relevant OCQ(V) work area(s) can be carried out.

31. Spot check audits (internal verification) will be carried out by 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. If an OV is found to have breached the RCVS Code of Conduct, appropriate disciplinary procedures will be considered, including withdrawal of OV status of those involved.

**Supervision of Approved TB Testers (ATTs)**

32. In England only OVs who are OCQ(V) - TT holders can act as Approved Veterinary Supervisors (AVSs) for Approved TB Testers (ATTs) as part of the pilot study.

33. An OV can act as an AVS following completion of a declaration provided by the training provider when an ATT enrols for the ATT qualification and nominates the OV as an AVS.

34. An AVS must nominate a deputy AVS (with the option for nominating two) when completing the declaration. The primary AVS is responsible for ensuring that the deputy or deputies are aware of their responsibilities in the deputy role.

35. An AVS will be responsible for ensuring familiarity with and adherence to all the relevant requirements for the ATT Policy for authorisation in England. This information is set out in the Policy for APHA Authorisation of Approved Tuberculin Testers in England (TR541) which can be found in the OV instructions on the Government Gateway.

36. Any risk or issue identified relating to the ATT under their supervision must be notified to the Agency without delay.

37. AVS must meet the requirements as laid out for the role/function described in The Approved Veterinary Supervisor Role (TR540) which can be found on the OV instructions on the Government Gateway.

**Performance of Tasks**

38. In accordance with requirements published in the OV instructions, OVs must maintain a high standard of hygiene and biosecurity when visiting farms, and other premises on behalf of Ministers, including the wearing of suitable protective clothing and the use of an approved disinfectant.

39. OVs should consider themselves the representative of the relevant Minister when carrying out their official tasks and should endeavour to explain government policy if questioned by a member of the public, taking into account variations between different Administrations in GB.
All OVs will have access to online OV instructions. These reflect the requirements of legislation and government policy. Additions and amendments are issued periodically and it is essential that all OVs refer to the current instructions. It is an individual OV’s responsibility to be up-to-date with all aspects of the work relevant to individual official controls authorisations. OVs are expected to monitor the email address they have registered with the training provider who administers training on behalf of APHA, in order to maintain awareness of updates and changes to aspects of the work relevant to individual controls.

OVs will be held personally and professionally responsible for all official tasks carried out by them and must personally sign all certificates and notices required and relating to those duties.

OVs maintain responsibility for the security of all information obtained in the course of the execution of their duties whether documentary, oral or 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 General Data Protection Regulations 2018 ("GDPR"). The unlawful disclosure of protected data shall be grounds for suspension or revocation of Authorisation.

OVs must abide by the standards in the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct which sets out Veterinary Surgeons’ professional responsibilities. They must pay particular attention to the guidance on certification which underpins OV activities and reflects EU legislative requirements.

An OV must not enter into any position whereby, in the reasonable opinion of APHA, there is or may be an actual conflict, or a potential conflict of interest, between the financial or personal interests of the OV and any person or business that the OV engages with in respect of the required duties carried out on behalf of APHA. This includes the certification for animals, animal products or other commodities:

- owned by them or a close relative or partner
- owned by a business or person where the OV has a financial interest or is an employee or
- owned by a business or person responsible for a significant proportion of the OV income

Conflict of interest is not limited to the above and that other situations may also be considered a conflict of interest.

In cases where there may be questions over conflict of interest, the OV must refer to APHA for further consideration and advice or ruling on the case. The RCVS may need to be consulted. There may be exceptions to this for veterinary surgeons working in research labs or educational institutions where access is limited.

OVs must ensure that all their official activities are covered by professional indemnity insurance or equivalent arrangements.

Assessment and Quality Assurance

Whilst OVs are carrying out their duties an assessment of proficiency and procedure must be carried out on the practice and the individual OVs working in the practice. Timings of these assessments are dependent upon the OCQ(V) held. In Scotland the OV practice is responsible for carrying out quality assurance on their OVs. In England and Wales APHA when visiting practices for other statutory may carry out this assessment.
49. For OV holding Export OCQ(V)s, the Centre for International Trade Carlisle (CITC) routinely monitors the quality of completed certification documents. Any issues found will be highlighted to the OV. Major issues and repeated minor issues will be reported directly by CITC to the relevant Senior Veterinary Manager (Grade 6 or 7 Veterinary Surgeon) in the Field Delivery in England, Scotland or Wales as appropriate for consideration of potential re-training or suspension.

50. All information on major and minor issues is copied to the OV Team for filing purposes.

51. APHA Senior Veterinary Managers are responsible for OV work carried out in their Delivery Areas or countries, irrespective of where the OV’s parent practice is situated. If there is a disciplinary matter involving an OV who has carried out work in one Delivery Area/Country but the parent practice is in a different Delivery Area/Country there will be liaison between both Senior Veterinary Managers. Any disciplinary action must be undertaken by the appropriate Senior Veterinary Manager in whose area the parent practice is located, following consultation with the Agency’s Veterinary Director or a Senior Veterinary Manager named by the Veterinary Director to deal with cases in his absence.

52. OV practices will be assessed by APHA Veterinary Staff as resources allow. Practices which are deficient will be targeted to improve. In the absence of a willingness to improve, consideration should be given to the withdrawal of OV status from individuals in the practice following discussions with Agency’s Veterinary Director.

53. When carrying out a practice visit APHA Veterinary staff should look at practice procedures as well as the likely involvement of OVs with future Defra, Scottish Government and Welsh Government policies.

54. If the member of Veterinary staff has cause to believe the standards of the practice, or that of individual OVs, are less than satisfactory, then they should refer their findings to a Senior Veterinary Manager. The latter may decide that an accompanied visit needs to be made with one or more of the OVs whilst they are performing OV duties. If the standards are not at these accompanied visits are found not to have been met then suspension may be required.

55. In addition to the export certification checks an enhanced field audit programme of bovine tuberculosis skin testing carried out by OVs is also in place. As with other audit schemes these checks provide assurance that regulatory standards are being followed when delivering tuberculin testing in GB.

56. Unannounced TB test audit visits will be carried out by the Agency assessing testing performance of OVs, using a risk based approach. This will continue to inform the audit programme which is designed to assess all OVs over a designated period.

57. When non-compliances with instructions are disclosed at these unannounced audits, corrective action will be taken in respect of the individual OV involved. Further details are available in the Field Audit of OVs Categories of Non-Compliance with Procedures (TR387). This document and more information on OV audit can be found in the OV instructions on the Government Gateway.

58. The Agency will carry out ad hoc analysis of OV’s work such as looking at OV performance. For example, this might include capturing TB reactor disclosure rates per number of animals tested as well as dealing with referrals or intelligence that standards are not being met such as:

- Export certification errors notified to the OV Team by CIT Carlisle; or
• TB paperwork or performance issues. This will include failure to notify APHA of test arranged date/time within given timescales

59. The appropriate Senior Veterinary Managers in England, Scotland or Wales will review this information and may apply local knowledge if appropriate to decide whether an individual OV or a practice needs to be approached for further action.

Revocation of Authorisation

60. The authorisation of an OV may be revoked for a number of reasons. These include where the OV:

• is no longer a Member of Fellow of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (MRCVS/FRCVS) for whatever reason (including suspension or removal from the RCVS register for disciplinary reasons, or for failure to pay fees)
• is convicted of a criminal offence that renders them unfit to be an OV
• no longer holds a valid certificate with respect to the OCQ(V) training as described in paragraphs 8 to 11 above
• voluntarily requests their authorisation be revoked, giving one week’s notice in writing to the Agency; or
• is subject to the final decision of a review panel or appeal outcome of any investigation

61. If an OV has their authorisation revoked for any of the above reasons the Agency will send a letter by email to their registered email address giving full reasons for the action taken. The OV has a right of appeal against this decision as set out the appeals section of this Policy Document.

62. If RCVS membership has been restored and the OV applies to be an OV again the case will be presented to a review panel comprising of two Senior Veterinary Managers to decide to what extent and under what conditions OV Authorisation should be restored. There is one exception to this: a review panel will not be needed in cases where membership has been removed for non-payment of fees and then restored following payment. For all other cases the review panel will submit their findings to the Veterinary Director who will make the final decision.

63. The Agency will also terminate the Conditional Authorisation of any OV who was required to complete a practical assessment with satisfactory results within a specified time period and has not done so. This applies to OCQ(V) - TT, OCQ(APP) - TT or any other qualification developed which requires practical assessment.

Suspension of Authorisation

64. The Authorisation of an OV will be suspended if a Senior Veterinary Manager in England, Scotland or Wales consider it necessary for the following reasons:

• there is evidence to suggest that the OV is not competent or is not performing their tasks to the required standards
• the OV infringes or fails to comply with the conditions of authorisation
or
• the OV is guilty of conduct which makes suspension or termination of the Authorisation desirable in the Agency’s interest or in the public interest

65. An OV can voluntarily suspend their authorisation at any time giving the Agency one week’s notice of their intention to suspend. In writing or by email to the OV Team.

66. As mentioned in the section on Assessment and Quality Assurance the Agency will monitor OV performance as it sees fit through a range of activities which could include both announced and unannounced audits including, but not limited to:

• quality assurance of government-funded OV work in accordance with applicable contracts;
• analysis of data such as TB test reports and copies of export certificates; and
• investigation of complaints, in particular from recipients of tasks undertaken by an OV

67. If an OV is authorised under a number of OCQ(V)s and only one OCQ(V) is not being carried out properly, the Agency may consider a temporary removal of the Authorisation for that particular OCQ(V) until suitable re-training has been undertaken and proficiency confirmed. The necessary authorisation will be temporarily removed from the OV’s record. However, if the non-compliance is determined to be serious/repetitive and deliberate rather than inadvertent then the Review panel may decide to suspend all OCQ(V)s.

68. In exceptional cases the Agency may decide to allow the OV to continue with their authorisation without suspension but stipulate they must only carry out the role under the supervision of a named supervisor whilst the investigation is in progress.

69. When an OV is suspended a Senior Veterinary Manager will be appointed to carry out and complete an investigation as quickly as possible. Usually this will be a Senior Veterinary Manager located in the delivery area where the OV works.

70. At the same time as an investigator is appointed the Senior Veterinary Members of the review panel should also be appointed. At least one of these must be a Grade 6 Veterinary Manager. The investigator will not be a member of the review panel.

71. The appointment of the investigator and members of the review panel will be agreed by the Senior Veterinary Manager responsible for the case and the Veterinary Director.

72. The Agency will not suspend an OV on the basis of a report from a third party without first carrying out an investigation unless the report is received from a statutory body and is of a serious nature.

73. Suspension of an OV’s authorisation will be initiated by the appropriate Senior Veterinary Manager for England, Scotland or Wales who will send a letter of suspension to the OV concerned. The letter will either be sent by email or by recorded delivery. The letter will set out the grounds for the proposed suspension and a date of commencement of the suspension along with an invitation to attend an investigation meeting. A copy of the letter and summary of the case will be sent to the Veterinary Director.

74. The letter should also remind the OV to stop all activities related to being an OV for the relevant tasks, and will ask them to return their OV stamp to the OV Team. Copies of all documents will be sent to the OV Team and Regulatory Assurance, Compliance and Enforcement (RACE) Team.
Investigation

75. Investigations pursuant to any allegation or circumstance shall be conducted in accordance with the following:

- a sole investigator, who is a permanent employee of the Agency and a Senior Veterinary Manager, will be appointed to carry out and complete an investigation without unreasonable delay
- the investigator shall notify the OV in writing of the terms of the allegation and request a relevant account in writing or in person as the case may be. Such notification shall be sent to the OV’s registered email address or by recorded delivery to their practice address.
- if the OV wishes to appear in person they may be accompanied at any interview or represented at their own expense. The OV must notify the investigator of the attendance of their representative no later than 72 hours before the appointed date of the interview
- the Agency will treat all reports and other documents as confidential except that they may be shared with the RCVS and any other statutory body with a legitimate interest where such disclosure is authorised under the relevant GDPR or other legislation or if criminal intent is evident
- if the allegation raises concerns over the validity of the OCQ(V) qualification then the training provider will be notified so that they can consider the status of the qualification that the OV has obtained

76. In cases where there is evidence of non-compliance with instructions or with the standards in this policy or of alleged misconduct, the Agency’s investigator may request a Senior Veterinary Manager (not below Grade 6 and appointed by the Veterinary Director), to either suspend the OV’s Authorisation before the investigation is complete, or require the OV to be under the supervision of a named supervisor until the review panel has come to its decision. In such cases the investigation and review will be conducted without delay on the part of the Agency.

77. The investigator may interview such parties as they consider fit and shall make every attempt to interview any persons suggested by the OV and considered to be relevant to the allegation made. Should the investigator fail to interview parties suggested by the OV they shall account for such failure in any report produced.

78. The OV shall co-operate with any reasonable request to assist the investigation, including the production of documents or attendance at an interview. Failure to comply with all such reasonable requests shall be included in the final report and may be considered as grounds for suspension of Authorisation.

79. The OV will be given a draft of the investigator’s report which shall be labelled draft and submitted in writing to their registered email address or by recorded delivery to their practice address, with an invitation to review the document and to correct any factual errors or to make any relevant comments. The OV will have 14 days to do this and will be expected to respond by email to the person appointed to receive such communication. The Agency may grant extra time to the OV to review the report if there is reasonable justification provided that request is received in writing before the expiry of the 14 day period.

80. The final report shall be forwarded to the review panel and copied to the Veterinary Director.
Decision of the Review Panel

81. A member of the review panel will invite the OV to a review panel meeting. The OV will be given at least five working days’ notice of the date of the meeting. The OV will be invited to make representations and given the opportunity to present any relevant mitigating factors. The OV may do this orally at the meeting or in writing before the meeting. No expenses will be payable to the OV for attendance at this meeting.

82. The OV may be accompanied at the review meeting but the cost of their representative attending the meeting will be at their expense. The OV must notify the member of the review panel who invited them to the meeting, that they will be accompanied by a representative no later than 72 hours before the appointed date of the interview.

83. Where the investigator has confirmed the allegation of intentional non-compliance with instructions or standards or professional misconduct it is acceptable to request the review panel to either suspend the OV’s authorisation if they are not already suspended but under the direct supervision of a named supervisor until the review panel has come to its decision.

84. The review panel may decide on any one or more of the following outcomes in proportion to their findings:

- no further action required
- reinstatement of authorisation if suspended
- written advice given to the OV
- suspension of authorisation with respect to one or more OCQ(V)s pending retraining at the OV’s expense
- removal of authorisation for one or more OCQ(V)s. The panel will also set a period (maximum five years) before the OV can re-apply for authorisation
- referral to the RCVS where there are grounds for concerns as to professional conduct
- additional conditions such as working under the supervision of a named OV for a specified period of time
- invalidation of a test, export certificate or other relevant output where the review panel is sufficiently concerned that the OV has not acted appropriately in performing the specific task
- referral to a Local Authority or to the police for investigation if there is evidence that an offence may have been committed
- any other action that the Agency considers necessary

85. 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. Professional misconduct, or intentional or repeated non-compliance with OV procedures would justify a long period of suspension of Authorisation. Retraining would be offered for a first offence if there is a reasonable prospect that the OV’s competence or diligence would improve.

86. If the review panel finds that it is necessary to remove the Authorisation of an OV and there has been a similar incident within the previous five years then the OV’s Authorisation will normally be removed for five years from the date of the decision. If the OV wishes to apply
for a shorter period of removal on the basis of mitigating factors then the review panel will consult the Veterinary Director before taking such a decision.

87. The review panel will normally make a decision within five working days of the meeting and immediately communicate this in writing to the OV after discussing the findings with the Veterinary Director. The findings and decision will be reported to the OV in a letter sent to their personal email address or by recorded delivery to their practice address.

88. The review panel will send copies of all their documents to Veterinary Director, OV Team and RACE Team.

89. In the event that authorisation is suspended and the allegation raises concerns over the validity of the OCQ(V) qualification then the training provider will be notified so that they can consider the status of the qualification that the OV has obtained.

**Appeals**

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

- the appeal must be in writing and addressed to the Agency’s Veterinary Director and sent by either email or by letter to the following address:

  APHA Corporate Correspondcence@apha.gov.uk  
  Or  
  Corporate Correspondence  
  APHA Weybridge  
  Woodham Lane  
  New Haw  
  Addlestone  
  Surrey  
  KT15 3NB

  - it must be received within 28 days of the date of the review panel's written communication detailing their findings and the outcome and

  - it must set out the grounds of appeal

91. The Veterinary Director may within 14 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 14 days to decide the appeal.

92. If the OV has been removed then this will continue during the 28 day period allowed for lodging an appeal and while the appeal is being considered.

93. The decision of the Veterinary Director, or the person appointed by them, is final.

**Restoration of Authorisation**

94. If authorisation as an OV has been lost due to the expiry of an OCQ(V), which has not been revalidated on time as outlined in paragraph 13, then full retraining, including the practical assessment for OCQ(V) - TT, will be required. Only after successful completion of retraining shall the OV be re-authorised. The OV can 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.
95. If authorisation was suspended during an investigation and the outcome of the investigation was favourable then authorisation will be restored to the extent that the OCQ(V)s affected are still valid. For the avoidance of doubt there will be no extension of the Authorisation period.

96. When an OV has had their authorisation removed as result of an investigation and a review panel decides that they can reapply for their authorisations 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 an OV.

97. If the review panel decides that there is no case to answer then their OCQ(V) will be reinstated automatically without referral to Veterinary Director.

Cessation of Appointments

Resignation

98. If an OV resigns from an OV Authorisation a written or email confirmation must be sent to the Agency. If the OV decides to resume OV work, completion of all relevant modules or re-validation will be required.

Retirement

99. If an OV intends to retire and no further work is to be carried out on behalf of the Agency they should amend their status on the training provider website or provide written or email notification to the Agency.

Death of OV during Appointment

100. Upon notification from an OV Practice that an OV has died the Agency will:

- update the training provider and Agency IT system with the details and
- request that the Official Stamp is returned or seek assurance that it has been destroyed.