



APHA Briefing Note 25/19

Further funding available for Official Controls Qualification (Veterinary) (OCQ(V)) training to certify the export of animal products to the EU and

Further funding available for Official Controls Qualification (Animal Health Paraprofessional) - Certification Support Officer (OCQ (AHP) - CSO) training

Purpose

1. To inform that **further funding is now available** to provide free-of-charge online training and registration for both:
 - a. The Official Controls Qualification (Veterinary) for Product Exports (OCQ(V) - PX) and, where not already held, the pre-requisite courses in Essential Skills (OCQ(V) - ES) and Exports General (OCQ(V) - EX)
 - b. The Official Controls Qualification (Animal Health Paraprofessional) Certification Support Officer qualification (OCQ(AHP) - CSO).

Background

2. After Brexit all exports of products of animal origin (POAO) to the European Union will require an Export Health Certificate (EHC), should the UK leave without a deal. This means there would be an increase in demand for certification of EHCs.
3. Although private veterinary businesses and some Local Authorities (LAs) are already providing export certification services, pressures on certification capacity may arise from the additional certification needed by businesses for EU exports, from the geographic location or from the remoteness of the exporting business to a Certifying Officer (CO), and/or from the time of day that operation and loading take place.

Veterinary surgeons not already operational in export certification are invited to consider delivering export certification services and taking advantage of the subsidised cost of obtaining the necessary qualification(s). Practices are invited to consider putting eligible members of the practice forward for Certification Support Officer (CSO) training

The terms of the OCQ(V) - PX qualification offer

4. The offer is to promote additional certification capacity, over and above the services already available. OVs who have already paid for training courses did so on the grounds of existing commercial demand. Therefore, no refunds are available to those who have already registered on the OV database and/or enrolled on courses.
5. The funding is available for the full qualifications only, not for revalidations. If a veterinarian previously held any of the required qualifications but they have now expired, they will be eligible for the funded full courses, subject to meeting the other requirements as set out below.
6. Veterinarians must be registered with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (but may or may not currently be OVs) and willing to offer export certification services in England, Scotland or Wales.
7. The offer, and access to any free training, may be withdrawn if the UK agrees on a deal with the EU that results in an implementation period or if the available budget limits are reached.
8. Depending on demand, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) may challenge and regulate applications to provide a suitable geographic distribution of product export certification services and to provide fair access for different employers within the available budget.
9. OVs who have taken up this offer – or their employer(s) – must offer a service to suitable exporters, and agree to be included in the listing of export health certification providers on GOV.UK (see [Briefing Note 03/19](#)). It is understood that even if a service is offered, delivery would depend on a suitable commercial contract being agreed between the food business operator, the exporter and the service provider, and this may not be possible in every case. There is no guarantee of demand for certification services.

Obtaining the OCQ(V) - PX qualification

10. Defra/APHA is providing funding for online training for the Official Controls Qualification (Veterinary) Product Exports (OCQ(V) - PX), and, if not already held, the prerequisite courses in Essential Skills (OCQ(V) - ES) and Exports General (OCQ(V) - EX), excluding revalidations. For veterinarians who are not currently OVs but wish to offer PX certification services, the registration fee will be funded too.
11. The OCQ(V) - PX covers the export of animal products, including food for human consumption and animal by-products. Please note that Essential Skills and Exports General qualifications are prerequisites for the Product Exports qualification. All three OCQ(V)s must be held before authorisation will be given to undertake certification of animal products (excluding germinal

products). The training provider for these courses is Improve International – relevant information can be found on their OCQ(V) training website at <https://www.improve-ov.com/home/>.

12. Any veterinarians who wish to take up this offer must send an email to CSCOneHealthOVTeam@apha.gov.uk and provide the following information:
 - Their RCVS membership number
 - Whether or not they are already registered for OV training with Improve International
 - A statement of which of the following qualifications they require:
 - I. Products Exports (OCQ(V) – PX) only
 - II. Products Exports (OCQ(V) – PX) and Exports General (OCQ(V) – EX)
 - III. Products Exports (OCQ(V) – PX) and Essential Skills (OCQ(V) – ES) and Exports General (OCQ(V) – EX)
13. Requests must be made by email, not by phone. The APHA OV Team will validate requests before providing instructions by email on how to access registration/enrolment free of charge. In order to avoid being charged, this must be done before registering via Improve International's OCQ(V) training website or enrolling on the courses. Refunds cannot be issued.
14. Online training for the qualification(s) will be provided free of charge to the extent that funding allows. Once free training funding has been exhausted, training may be purchased directly from Improve International via the website.

The CSO Role and Responsibilities

15. CSOs support Certifying Officers in the delivery of Export Health Certification for animal products (excluding germinal products). The use of CSOs is expected to increase the efficiency and productivity of OVs in providing export certification for animal products (excluding germinal products). CSOs are not able to support OVs for live animal or germinal products certification.
16. CSOs will act in a supporting role to provide evidence to an OV holding the Product (PX) qualification to facilitate the signing of an Export Health Certificate (EHC). CSOs can perform tasks to provide OVs with the assurances they require to certify products for export, for example (but not exclusively) carrying out inspections, checking identification of products and checking labelling against requirements. This is a non-veterinary role, anything that requires veterinary judgement is excluded from the role of the CSO. Further information on the CSO role can be found on [Vet Gateway](#).
17. CSOs cannot sign an Export Health Certificate themselves.

Obtaining the CSO Qualification

18. To become a Certification Support Officer (CSO) in Great Britain, individuals must hold the OCQ(AHP) - CSO qualification and be authorised by AHPA. The qualification is obtained online and is available through Improve International from the [Animal Health Paraprofessional website](#).
19. The 6-hour course provides candidates with basic training regarding official export health certification principles and context. A candidates must pass an invigilated online test before they are authorised by APHA as a CSO.
20. Candidates wishing to become CSOs must register themselves via the website and nominate an OV (or Local Authority CO) before they can enrol for the training. Eligibility criteria apply and these are set out on the [website](#).
21. The nominated OV or (or Local Authority CO) must personally confirm that the employer has made the required checks and make additional checks themselves as necessary, then make an online declaration of eligibility for the candidate by following the link that will be emailed to them. Details for verification include identity confirmation, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) document (i.e. free from criminal convictions), minimum academic qualifications (3 A-levels, one of which must be in a English language skills and right to work in the UK. See the [website](#) for full details.
22. Registration and enrolment normally require payment, however there are 200 funded places available. These can be applied for by using the codes below. The funded places are on a first come, first served basis, and the codes will not work for additional places.
 - a) For registration, use the invoice code APHCSR
 - b) For subsequent enrolment – following eligibility verification by an OV or other authorised Certifying Officer (CO) – enter the invoice code APHCSE
23. Online training for the qualification will be provided free of charge to the extent that funding allows. Once free training funding has been exhausted, training may be purchased directly from Improve International via the website.
24. Depending on demand, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) may challenge and regulate applications to provide a suitable geographic distribution of services and to provide fair access for different employers within the available budget.

Further Information

25. Any queries regarding the courses should be directed to Improve International: <https://www.improve-ov.com/contact>. For veterinary queries contact APHA: CSCOneHealthOVTeam@apha.gov.uk

26. OVs are reminded of other recent communications relating to export certification:

- Export Health Certificate Form Finder Service on GOV.UK ([Briefing Note 21/18](#)). <https://www.gov.uk/export-health-certificates>
- Listing of export health certification providers on GOV.UK ([Briefing Note 03/19](#))

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