



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

APHA Briefing Note 32/20

Further funding available for Official Controls Qualification (Veterinary) (OCQ(V)) training to certify the export of animals and animal products to the EU and for Official Controls Qualification (Animal Health Paraprofessional) - Certification Support Officer (OCQ(AHP) - CSO) training

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Purpose

1. **Further funding is now available** to provide free-of-charge online training for:
 - 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 (Veterinary) for Ungulate Exports (OCQ(V) - UX) and, where not already held, the pre-requisite courses in Essential Skills (OCQ(V) - ES) and Exports General (OCQ(V) - EX)
 - c. The Official Controls Qualification (Veterinary) for Equine Exports (OCQ(V) - EQ) and, where not already held, the pre-requisite courses in Essential Skills (OCQ(V) - ES) and Exports General (OCQ(V) - EX)
 - d. The Certification Support Officer (CSO) qualification, i.e. OCQ(AHP) - CSO.

Background

2. Following the end of the Transition Period, animals and animal products will require export health certification for exports to the EU. This includes equines, which currently move without health certification between Great Britain, France and Republic of Ireland. Under the Northern Ireland Protocol, movements of live animals

and animal products from Great Britain to Northern Ireland will require the same level of certification.

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 and movements to NI. This is because of the geographic location or remoteness of the exporting business to a Certifying Officer, and/or the time of day that operation and loading takes place.
4. Veterinary surgeons who are not already providing export certification services for a particular type of commodity and want to train up in this area can apply for free training to acquire the qualification.
5. There are also free places available for basic training of Certification Support Officers who can perform certain tasks required to undertake certification of animal products (excluding germinal products). Veterinary surgeons may wish to consider whether existing members of the practice may be appropriate for this training. They may also wish to appoint new staff in advance of the end of the Transition Period, in anticipation of the increased demand for certification at the end of the year and to take advantage of the availability of funded training.

The OCQ(V) qualification offer

6. This offer is designed to increase certification capacity. Official Veterinarians (OVs) who have already paid for training courses did so because of existing commercial demand. Therefore, no refunds are available to those who have already registered on the OV database and/or enrolled on courses.
7. The funding is available for the full qualifications only and not for revalidations. If you previously held any of the required qualifications but they have now expired, you will be eligible for funding for the full courses, subject to meeting the other requirements set out below, but you will not be eligible for funding for revalidation courses.
8. Veterinarians must be registered with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (but may or may not currently be OVs) and be willing to offer export certification services in England, Scotland or Wales.
9. The offer, and access to any free training, may be withdrawn if the available budget limits are reached.
10. Depending on demand, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) may regulate applications to help ensure a suitable geographic distribution of certification services and to provide fair access for different employers within the available budget.
11. OVs or employers of OVs who have taken up this offer must offer a service to suitable exporters. To do so, they will also need to be registered on Export Health Certificate Online, more details on this are available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). 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 (where relevant) and/or the exporter and the certification service provider and this may not be possible in every case. There is no guarantee of demand for certification services.

Obtaining the OCQ(V) - UX, EQ and/or PX qualification

12. Defra/APHA is providing funding for online training for the Official Controls Qualification (Veterinary) - Ungulate Exports (OCQ(V) - UX), Equine Exports (OCQ(V) - EQ), and/or Product Exports (OCQ(V) - PX), and, if not already held, the prerequisite courses: 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, UX and/or EQ certification services, there will also be funding to cover the training provider's registration fee.
13. 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 training qualifications are pre-requisites 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).
14. The OCQ(V) - UX covers the export of ungulates, including equines. The OCQ(V) - EQ covers just the export of equines. As such, funding is available to undertake one, but not both, of these qualifications. Both qualifications require the Essential Skills and Exports General qualifications as pre-requisites.
15. We will not offer funding for just the Essential Skills and Exports General pre-requisite qualifications. One of PX, EQ or UX must also be taken.
16. The training provider for these courses is Improve International – further information is available at: <https://www.improve-ov.com/home/>
17. Registration with Improve International requires payment. In addition to the enrolment fees for the selected OCQ(V)s, this registration fee will be met as part of the offer for those vets not currently registered. The standard fee for registration is £59 plus VAT.
18. If you wish to take up this offer you must send an email to: CSCOneHealthOVTeam@apha.gov.uk and provide the following information:
 - Your RCVS membership number
 - State whether or not you are already registered as an OV with Improve International, and which of the following qualifications you require:
 1. Essential Skills (OCQ(V) - ES)
 2. Exports General (OCQ(V) - EX)
 3. Product Exports (OCQ(V) - PX)
 4. Ungulate Exports (OCQ(V) - UX)
 5. Equine Exports (OCQ(V) - EQ)

19. Your request must be made by email, not by phone. The APHA OV Team will validate your request before providing instructions by email on how to access registration/enrolment free of charge. This must be done before registering with Improve International or enrolling on the courses, to avoid being charged. Refunds cannot be issued.
20. Once the free training funding has been exhausted, training may be purchased directly from Improve International via their website.

Certification Support Officers (CSOs) - Role and Responsibilities

21. 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. CSOs are not able to support OVs for live animal or germinal products certification.
22. CSOs will act in a supporting role to collect evidence under direction of an OV holding the Product Exports (PX) authorisation, to facilitate 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. Anything that requires veterinary judgement is excluded. Further information on the CSO role can be found on the [APHA Vet Gateway](#).
23. CSOs cannot sign an Export Health Certificate (EHC).

Obtaining the CSO Qualification

24. To be a Certification Support Officer (CSO), individuals must hold the OCQ(AHP) - CSO qualification. The qualification is obtained online and is available through [Improve International](#) from the [Animal Health Paraprofessional \(AHP\) website](#).
25. The online modular course is available through the Improve International AHP website and provides candidates with basic training on official export health certification principles and context and takes approximately 6 hours to complete. Candidates will be expected to pass an invigilated online examination. Only officials, such as OVs holding the OCQ(V) - PX qualification or Food Competent Certifying Officers (FCCOs), may act as invigilators. Details are provided on the Improve International AHP website.
26. The minimum requirement for an individual to register for the OCQ(AHP)CSO module is 3 A levels, one of which must be a natural science or food production subject. Equivalent qualifications are eligible, for example Scottish Highers or qualifications awarded outside of the UK. Any UK university degree will negate the A-level requirement. Candidates with suitable experience for at least three years,

e.g. veterinary nurse qualifications (RVN) or working in a regulatory role, will be considered on merit even if they do not meet the minimum academic requirements. Further details are on the AHP website.

27. The standard fee for enrolling on the OCQ(AHP) - CSO qualification is £149 plus VAT (plus a one-time registration fee of £59 plus VAT).

28. However, candidates will have these fees waived if they enter the invoice code **20APAHPF*** at the following stages:

- a. For registration on the AHP database
- b. For subsequent enrolment on the CSO course, following eligibility verification by a Certifying Officer

* This invoice code is only valid for the CSO qualification. OVs must apply to APHA for relevant codes.

29. Online training for the qualification will be provided free of charge as long as there is funding available. Once free training funding has been exhausted, training may be purchased directly from Improve International via their AHP website.

30. Candidates wishing to become CSOs must register themselves via the website and nominate an OV or local authority Certifying Officer (with relevant food law code of practice competence) to validate their eligibility before they can enrol for the training.

31. The nominated OV or FCCO must personally confirm that the required checks have been made 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, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) document check, (i.e. free from criminal convictions), minimum academic qualifications, English language skills and right to work in the UK. Details of the minimum academic qualifications are available on the [Improve International](#) website.

Further Information

32. APHA reserves the right to select applications if there is excessive demand for places and will operate a 'fair usage policy'.

33. If you have any queries about the courses, please contact Improve International (<https://www.improve-ov.com/contact>) or, for veterinary queries, contact APHA by emailing CSCOneHealthOVTeam@apha.gov.uk

34. Guidance for Certifiers on the Export Health Certificates (EHC) Online service can be found on the EHC Online page of the APHA [Vet Gateway](#).

35. Guidance for Certifiers on how to register for the EHC Online service can be found on the [GOV.UK](#) EHC Online registration page.

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