

NEW APPROACH TO OV TRAINING

INTRODUCTION OF OFFICIAL CONTROL OF QUALIFICATION (VETERINARY)

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A. BACKGROUND

1. Why introduce the new approach?

In July 2013, AHVLA [announced plans to improve](#) the quality and accessibility of training for Official Veterinarians (OVs) through the introduction of a more modern, flexible approach to training which reflects business needs and changes in the veterinary business landscape.

The previous system of training OVs reflected a historic concept of veterinary practice structure and of the veterinary workforce. Many practices still operate along conventional lines and will retain easy access to the new system, but there is now a variety of business models, offering different propositions to their clients, and it is necessary not to impede such developments through an inadequate system of training and authorisation.

In addition, all state veterinary functions are now subject to audit by international organisations such as the Food and Veterinary Office of the European Commission. In order to withstand increasing scrutiny, and safeguard our ability to trade internationally, it is necessary to meet reasonable expectations for governance of our entire national veterinary service.

As government services should be provided 'digital-by-default' new ways of working, such as electronic systems for export certification and reporting test results, will require additional training and retraining; it is also appropriate for this to be delivered digitally where possible.

As such it is appropriate to put training of OVs in the hands of an organisation with proven success in veterinary education and with the potential for added value CPD to be supplied to the profession.

2. Who is the training provider?

Following a competitive tendering exercise, AHVLA has contracted with Improve International who, in partnership with the European School of Veterinary Postgraduate Studies (ESVPS) and Harper Adams University, will develop and deliver this training.

Improve International are an established provider of continuing veterinary education and professional development. Information on Improve International is available on their home website which can be found at <http://www.improveinternational.com>.

3. What is an OCQ (V)?

AHVLA is introducing a new qualification which vets will be required to hold in order to act as an Official Veterinarian. This new qualification, which will replace existing OV Panels, will be called an Official Controls Qualification (Veterinary), or OCQ (V).

The term OCQ (V) will be followed by two letters which indicate the work area covered by the specific qualification OCQ (V). Further details on the work areas covered by each OCQ (V) will shortly be available on Improve International's dedicated website: www.improve-ov.com, but a synopsis of each is shown below.

OCQ(V)		Summary of content
OCQ (V) - ES	Essential Skills	Basics of state veterinary medicine, working with AHVLA, regulation and statutory control of animal diseases and animal welfare, principles of certification, avoidance of conflicts of interest, communication, health and safety etc. A prerequisite for any other module (with the exception on OCQ (V) - CA).
OCQ (V) - TT	Tuberculin Testing	Tuberculin testing of cattle and other species.
OCQ (V) - SS	Statutory Surveillance	Statutory surveillance activities for 'endemic' diseases other than bTB; currently brucellosis and anthrax testing but others may be added.
OCQ (V) - EX	Exports, General	General principles of international trade, export procedures and export certification, a foundation for the following export modules. This alone may be sufficient for certain exports for which no further training is required (e.g. insects, live fish etc.)

OCQ (V) - SX	Small Animal Exports	Exports of companion animals including PETS and pet birds. Incorporates commercial exports of small animals, including export of small zoo and laboratory animals.
OCQ (V) - UX	Ungulate Exports	Exports of ungulates including equidae.
OCQ (V) - AX	Avian Exports	Export of poultry including Poultry Health Scheme and captive birds which are not pets.
OCQ (V) - PX	Product Exports	Export of products of animal origin including food for human consumption and animal by-products.
OCQ (V) - GX	Germplasm Exports	Exports of germplasm including supervision of AI centres.
OCQ (V) - CA	Companion Animals	A separate self-contained module specifically designed for companion animal vets with minimal reference to production animal issues. No requirement to undertake OCQ (V) - ES and OCQ (V) - EX.

4. Will there be a charge for this training?

In future training will be delivered through the best available technology enabling distance learning, offering individual vets and employers significant advantages and cost savings over the current training model. Given this, and the professional and business benefits that accrue from OV status, it is not unreasonable to expect recipients to pay for this training.

Existing OVs will however benefit from 'grandfather rights' meaning that they do not have to undertake initial training for the OCQ (V) equivalents of OV Panels they already possess, provided they confirm that they have refreshed their knowledge of OV instructions and the RCVS code (see question 28.)

5. How much will OCQ (V)s cost?

AHVLA has listened to the feedback from the profession and has chosen as its training partner a supplier that offers the right mix of high quality, professionally delivered and accessible training at an affordable cost.

Improve International will provide more details of costs as each training module is delivered, but the cost of modules will begin at £99, rising to a maximum of £249 (plus VAT). As the new approach to training will enable distance learning, the overall cost to vets should reduce because they would be able to access training on demand instead of waiting for several months for a course to become available, and they could use spare hours during the working

day or out of hours rather than travelling to an AHVLA site during time which might otherwise have been used to provide chargeable services.

6. What are the benefits to me as an OV or veterinary business?

Training will contribute to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and, as it will be available on demand, will eliminate the delays in training courses being available. It will also remove the need for vets to be away from their work place, sometimes at distant locations, as courses can be taken online, either out of hours or during the working day.

In addition, all qualifications are validated by Harper Adams University and there will be an option on registration for candidates to elect to gain university credits on gaining an OCQ (V). There is a small additional fee for these credits but each OCQ (V) can carry 5 credits at Level 5 within the QAA Framework.

B. IMPLEMENTING THE NEW MODEL

7. How will the new training system be introduced and administered?

From August 2014 vets, including existing OVs, can register with Improve International via their website at: <http://www.improve-ov.com>. It is necessary to register to access the training and hold an OCQ (V).

8. Do existing OVs need to register?

Yes, it is necessary for existing Official Veterinarians to register on this system by 31 March 2015 in order to retain their OV status.

Upon registration existing OVs should indicate which of their OV panels they wish to retain. Under 'grandfather rights' these panels will then be automatically transferred to the equivalent OCQ (V) without the need to undertake any further training or assessment. The retention of the OCQ (V) will however require periodic revalidation in accordance with the revalidation period of the specific OCQ (V) (see below).

Existing OVs who fail to register by 31 March 2015 will have their OV status removed and will be required to complete the initial training for any OCQ (V) they wish to hold in future.

9. Will I have to pay to register?

Yes, individuals will be charged a one-off fee of £59.00 plus VAT at the time of registration, however there will be a discount for early registration, before 9 January 2015, for existing OVs (reducing to £39 plus VAT) and final year veterinary students (reducing to £49 plus

VAT). This registration fee is separate to those for individual OCQ (V) training or revalidation modules.

10. What if I don't want to pay to register or continue with OV work?

All OVs who wish to work on behalf of AHVLA, Scottish Government or Welsh Government must register with the training provider to access the necessary training and hold an OCQ (V). If an existing OV does not register with the training provider by 31st March 2015 their OV status will be removed.

Vets who do not wish to register with Improve International will continue to hold their relevant panel status and can continue to operate as an OV, until 31 March 2015 when the old panels will be revoked and their OV status will be removed. Vets who wish to resign as OVs before 31 March 2015 will need to return their pocket certificate and OV stamp to AHVLA.

11. When will training for the existing OV Panels end?

No new registrations for training for existing OV Panels will now be accepted. The OCQ (V)s with highest demand - TT, ES & CA - will be available in September 2014, and training for all remaining OCQ (V)s will be available by February 2015. Given these timescales and AHVLA's inability to deliver training significantly in advance of these dates, AHVLA will no longer accept new applications for training for OV Panels.

12. What happens to my data?

Data held will be protected in accordance with the Data Protection Act but, as part of the registration process, those registering will be required to agree to data provided being shared between Improve International and AHVLA. This is necessary in order that AHVLA is able to authorise the individual to work as an Official Veterinarian on behalf of ministers.

It is the responsibility of the individual registering to ensure their information is kept up to date.

13. What about electronic signatures?

To enable the required and relevant checks to be carried out, for example on export health certificates, it will be necessary to have electronic signatures on the individual registration record. The signature will need to be scanned and sent electronically to Improve International. This should be done as part of the initial registration process or prior to revalidation by existing OVs. Where it is not possible for an individual to scan their signature, other methods will be made available by the training provider.

14. Who can hold an OCQ (V)?

It is not a requirement to be a vet to undertake OCQ (V) training or to hold an OCQ (V) qualification, but only vets who hold an OCQ (V) qualification and are full members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons are able to be authorised as Official Veterinarians.

15. When will OCQ (V) training modules be available?

The first three OCQ (V) courses will be available online in September 2014. The courses will be:

- Essential Skills (ES)
- Tuberculin Testing (TT)
- Companion Animals (CA).

OCQ (V) ES is an essential prerequisite for all other OCQ (V)s except OCQ (V) CA. The OCQ (V) CA module covers all the necessary elements of the OCQ (V) ES and OCQ (V) EX modules so it is not necessary to complete these in addition to be able to carry out companion animal work.

The remaining OCQ (V)s will be phased in over the next months, with all of them being available no later than February 2015. These will cover the other aspects of OV work, such as general and specialist exports and statutory surveillance.

16. How will the training be delivered?

The training for each OCQ (V) consists of a series of online modules that can be taken in more than one session. The modules must however be completed in sequence. A record of progress will be maintained by the training provider showing an individual's progress through the course.

Each OCQ (V) will comprise reflective exercises throughout the modules, culminating in a final online examination. Candidates will have an opportunity to re-take the examination if they are initially unsuccessful. OCQ (V) – TT also requires an assessment of practical skills (see questions 24 and 29).

17. How many OCQ (V)s can be held?

There is no limit to the number of OCQ (V) that an individual can hold.

18. Are there constraints on which OCQ (V)s can be held?

Anyone can train for and hold any OCQ (V)s, irrespective of whether they currently work in the field covered by the qualification, as they form part of continuing professional development. For example, a small animal practitioner can still hold an OCQ (V) that relates to large animals.

C. EXISTING OV PANELS

19. As an existing OV, what panels do I hold?

In most cases all the panels held by the OV are listed on their pocket certificate. These should be selected when registering with the training provider, provided the OV wishes to hold the equivalent OCQ (V).

20. What if I think I hold panels not listed on the pocket certificate?

A list of OVs and their current panels will be sent by AHVLA to the Training Provider to cross check the registration record of the OV. If an OV believes they hold panels that are not listed on their pocket certificates, and selects these on registration with Improve International, an exception report will be sent to AHVLA to investigate as there are instances where an OV may hold a panel not listed on their pocket certificate.

21. How should I decide which panels to retain?

It is up to the individual which panels they wish to retain and which they choose not to keep. There will be a full description of each OCQ (V)s on Improve Internationals website to assist in making this decision.

22. Will all the old panels be covered by the OCQ (V)s?

No, certain panels will not be covered as they are no longer required. OVs will no longer be authorised to undertake work covered by the following panels:

1d	Other notifiable diseases
1e	Market inspections
1f	Import of birds, poultry and hatching eggs
1q	National scrapie control plan
1r	Bluetongue
1s	Turkey national scrapie control plan
6a	No longer allocated
6c	Supervision of imported offal establishments

D. APPROVAL AS AN OV

23. Can I operate as an OV once I have obtained the relevant an OCQ (V)?

No, once the OCQ (V) course has been successfully completed, Improve International will notify AHVLA of an individual's qualification and relevant MRCVS number. AHVLA will then authorise the vet as an OV. Only once the vet has been authorised to work as an OV can they do so.

24. Will attaining OCQ (V) qualifications guarantee me work as an Official Veterinarian?

No, in future for an individual vet to act as an OV they will need to be a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) in addition to them having the relevant OCQ (V). AHVLA will continue to provide the final authorisation on behalf of Defra, Scottish and Welsh Governments which will apply for the duration of the validity of the certificate of competence. OVs shall not be obliged to undertake OV work and no commitment is made by AHVLA in relation to the availability of government funded OV work.

25. What does OCQ (V) – TT provisional status mean?

With respect of OCQ (V) - TT only, the successful completion of the online training course will confer only provisional authorisation to act as an OV qualified to conduct TB skin tests. Such tests can only be undertaken under the supervision of a fully qualified tester. Full OV status will only be conferred on completion of the OCQ (V) - TT supervised test, which will be arranged by the training provider (see question 30).

26. Are OCQ (V)s portable?

An OCQ (V) is taken by the individual and becomes part of a CPD record. The qualification is therefore portable between employers in the same way as others.

OVs should however ensure that any changes to employer details are updated on their registration record held by Improve International, as AHVLA will need to be aware of an OVs employer in order to ensure that that payments are correctly made for any work undertaken by the OV on behalf of AHVLA.

E. REVALIDATION OF QUALIFICATIONS

27. Why has revalidation of qualifications been introduced?

It is no longer appropriate for vets authorised to perform official functions to be trained once and then given minimal support for the rest of their careers. Procedures change, skills can be lost and it is important that vets be confident that their knowledge is up to date when they carry out an official function, not least to have a defence should something go wrong. Other professions have introduced revalidation and while it may not be a requirement for many aspects of veterinary practice it is considered essential for duties discharged on behalf of

government in order to meet international standards. For this reason AHVLA has introduced a revalidation requirement for OCQ (V)s.

28. What are 'grandfather rights'?

Existing experienced OV's will not be required to undertake initial training for the OCQ (V) equivalents of OV Panels they already possess. Rather, 'grandfather rights' will be conferred upon them from 31 March 2015 provided that they have refreshed their knowledge of OV instructions and the RCVS code. These rights will last for the revalidation period of the specific OCQ (V). For example the 'grandfather rights' period for OCQ (V) - TT is two years, meaning that an existing OV with grandfather rights will have two years, commencing 31 March 2015, in which to undertake revalidation training in order to retain the qualification.

29. How long will the OCQ (V)s be valid for?

The validation period for each OCQ (V) is shown below. To retain an OCQ (V) it will be necessary to successfully complete revalidation training before the end of the revalidation period appropriate to the specific OCQ (V).

The expiry date is determined from the date which an individual passed either the original OCQ (V) or previous re-validation training. Current OV with 'grandfather rights' will initially set their revalidation as from 31 March 2015.

OCQ (V) revalidation periods

OCQ(V) - ES	5 years
OCQ(V) - TT	2 years
OCQ(V) - CA	5 years
OCQ(V) - SS	3 years
OCQ(V) - EX	5 years
OCQ(V) - UX	3 years
OCQ(V) - SX	5 years
OCQ(V) - PX	3 years
OCQ(V) - AX	3 years
OCQ(V) - GX	3 years

30. What form will revalidation take?

Revalidation will normally require that a short online module be undertaken.

In the case of OCQ (V) - TT, part of revalidation will be an audit of an OV's practical performance with satisfactory results. This is likely to be undertaken by a partner or senior member of a veterinary business. In most cases this responsibility will rest with the Delivery Partner (for further information on Delivery Partners see: <http://ahvla.defra.gov.uk/official-vets/changes-to-procurments/index.htm>).

31. When will revalidation modules be available?

The revalidation courses will be the last modules to be developed but should be available from April 2015. The OCQ (V) - TT revalidation module is likely to be available sooner, probably from December 2014.

32. What happens if an OCQ (V) is allowed to expire?

As it is a requirement to hold the relevant current OCQ (V) in order to operate as an OV, the OV status of a vet will expire with the expiration of the related OCQ (V) and they will be unable to continue to do OV work covered by this qualification.

As OCQ (V) - ES is an essential requirement to act as an OV, the failure to revalidate this qualification will result in a vet losing OV status, irrespective of what other OCQ (V)s are held. An exception to this is vets holding only the OCQ (V) – CA qualification, as this is a self-contained qualification and does not also require that the OCQ (V) – ES is also held.

Improve International will send a reminder to the OV prior to the expiry date of the OCQ (V) encouraging them to revalidate their qualification. If a qualification is not revalidated before its expiration date, it will be necessary to undertake the full initial training for the OCQ (V).