

Official Veterinarians – revalidation

In response to member concerns around the revalidation requirements for OCQ(V)s and the potential detrimental impact on the UK's ability to respond to disease outbreak and service export certification needs both now and post-Brexit, we asked members to complete a survey telling us about the qualifications they hold or have dropped, and why.

The response rate was unprecedented, with almost 1300 members getting in touch, citing expiry of grandfather rights and the onerous and repetitive nature of the training as key reasons for deciding to drop qualifications. [Read the summary results of the OV revalidation survey \(PDF 241 KB\).](#)

We subsequently had a constructive meeting with APHA who recognise that there are issues with the current system and are keen to work with us to make it more proportionate and fit for purpose while continuing to maintain high standards.

Based on the member feedback received, we have developed some draft proposals for improvements to the content and structure of the modules to reduce duplication, ensure relevance, and ensure that the training more accurately reflects the real-life experience of OV work.

Relevance of training

Member feedback indicated a great deal of dissatisfaction with the content of the training, which has very little to do with the day-to-day 'real-life' practicalities of OV work, particularly with regard to the export certification modules. The training does not teach competence, nor does it adequately prepare participants for the assessment. There are some useful scenario-based elements within the current training (eg PX task to complete an export health certificate for duck feathers and pork products using the information provided and referencing technical notes. Once complete the candidate could download the completed version and cross-check accuracy)

Recommendation 1: the training material should be revised to incorporate more scenario-based elements that reflect the reality of carrying out OV work, including how and where to access the relevant guidance and advice

Relevance of exam

We understand from member feedback that the assessment, which takes the form of multiple-choice questions (MCQs), is primarily a test of the candidates' ability to remember large quantities of technical detail. The reality of OV work means that OVs regularly refer to guidance notes in order to ensure the absolute accuracy of their certification. In fact, it would be irresponsible to do otherwise and OVs would not rely on memory alone when carrying out their duties. This is

apparently recognised to some extent in the training material which encourages OVs to check the relevant guidance, however, this is not then reflected in the assessment which instead demands detailed recall. We also understand that the MCQs often incorporate negatives or double-negatives, when it is widely accepted that this is not effective as a discriminator of competence.

Recommendation 2: The assessment should be revised to move away from multiple-choice questions and ensure that OV competence is being examined, rather than ability to memorise. The questions should test the OV's understanding of which guidance notes and technical information is relevant to the work, and where that guidance can be accessed.

Recommendation 3: The assessment questions should avoid the use of negatives and double-negatives.

Assessment conditions

Although we are supportive of the principle that candidates completing the online assessment must do so in the presence of an MRCVS, we consider this is most appropriate for new OVs, and we recognise that this requirement presents some difficulties for some individuals. There is currently flexibility for those living in remote areas to complete the exam in the presence of another professional colleague such as a doctor or lawyer, which we support, and we would like to see communicated more effectively and made more widely available as an option. There is currently no recognition for those living in extreme remote areas (eg Highlands and Islands) that the practicalities of appointing an invigilator may make it unfeasible to continue with OV work.

Recommendation 4: There should be improved communication around the flexibility regarding invigilation for those living in remote areas. The list of acceptable professional persons should be extended and should include RVNs. The option should also be open to all candidates seeking revalidation

Recommendation 5: There should be further flexibility for those in extreme remote areas, including the option of continuous assessment in place of an exam and/or the option of invigilation via webcam/skype/using smart technology

Frequency and timing of revalidation

We strongly support the principle of OVs keeping skills up to date and there being a system in place to ensure the standardisation of training and quality assurance. The frequency of revalidation is variable across the modules which leads to confusion and frustration, combined with the timing of some revalidation being incompatible with the realities of veterinary work (eg TT revalidation in spring, often the busiest time of year for production animal vets)

Recommendation 6: Revalidation should be every five years as standard, with a risk-based approach applied and taking into account significant developments/changes in legislation

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Structure of modules

Member feedback has demonstrated an enormous amount of dissatisfaction with the duplication across the current module structure, as well as some issues relating to the lack of relevance of some material (eg equine requirement within the ungulate export module). We would like to see a structure that reduces the number of modules needed in order to qualify for a particular area of work, and we would like to see flexibility that allows those OVs completing more than one module to avoid being required to complete the same material. We appreciate of course that there is no perfect structure and there will always be some degree of duplication for some individuals.

Recommendation 7: The modules should be more suitably tailored in order to avoid duplication (see proposed structure below)

New module	Who is it for?	What does it include?
Export certification		
Ungulate Exports	For OVs certifying the export of live animals (excluding equine)	Relevant parts of current Essential Skills (ES) and Exports General (EX) modules + Ungulate Exports (UX) This module does not include equines, large zoo or laboratory animals
Equine Exports	For OVs certifying the export of live equines	Relevant parts of current Essential Skills (ES) and Exports General (EX) modules + Equine Exports (EQ)
Avian Exports	For OVs certifying the export of live poultry and game	Relevant parts of current Essential Skills (ES) and Exports General (EX) modules + Avian Exports (AX)
Product Exports	For OVs certifying the export of products of animal origin, including food for human consumption and animal by-products	Relevant parts of current Essential Skills (ES) and Exports General (EX) modules + Product Exports (PX)

Germinal Products Exports	For OVs certifying the export of germinal products, including the supervision of AI centres	Relevant parts of current Essential Skills (ES) and Exports General (EX) modules + Germinal Products Exports (GX)
Companion Animal Exports	For OVs certifying the export of companion animals, including Pet Travel Scheme, Pet Passports, and pet birds	Relevant parts of current Essential Skills (ES) and Exports General (EX) modules + Companion Animals (CA)
Zoo Animal Exports	For OVs certifying the export of zoo animals	Relevant parts of current Essential Skills (ES) and Exports General (EX) modules + relevant elements of: Ungulate Exports (UX) Equine Exports (EQ) Avian Exports (AX) Small Animal Exports (SX)
Lab Animal Exports	For OVs certifying the export of lab animals	Relevant parts of current Essential Skills (ES) and Exports General (EX) modules + relevant elements of: Ungulate Exports (UX) Small Animal Exports (SX)
Surveillance		
Statutory Surveillance	For OVs carrying out statutory surveillance (currently Brucellosis, Anthrax, Sheep Scab)	Relevant parts of current Essential Skills (ES) + Statutory Surveillance (SS)
Tuberculin Testing	For OVs carrying out tuberculin testing of cattle and other species	Relevant parts of current Essential Skills (ES) + Tuberculin Testing (TT)
Tuberculin Testing (Zoo)	For OVs carrying out tuberculin testing of zoo animals. A bolt on to the Zoo Animal Exports module	Relevant parts of Tuberculin Testing (TT) + tailored content relating to testing in primate and other zoo species ** Zoo animal exports is a pre-requisite

Cost of training and assessment

Although we received a lot of feedback with indicated that the cost of the training was too high, and often took longer than anticipated, we are conscious that much of the frustration was linked to the perceived duplication of material and associated drain on time. We believe that a reduction in duplication will result in less dissatisfaction with cost of training. We also appreciate that it has to be cost effective to run the training and assessment.

Recommendation 8: A nominal discount for those OV's completing more than one panel, or for those practices registering more than one OV, should be offered

Accessibility of training material

We understand that the training material is currently only available following registration and a maximum of two months prior to the revalidation deadline. There is also no option to download the material, which is inconsistent with other paid-for online CPD provision.

Recommendation 9: Training material should be available at least 3 months in advance of the revalidation deadline, with the option to download for access away from the Improve International platform.

Recommendation 10: Consideration should be given to improving navigation within the Improve International platform.