Updates to the Accredited Veterinary Nurse Scheme – Gold standard for clinical veterinary nurses

The Accredited Veterinary Nurse (AVN) Scheme was launched in April 2002 at the VNCA International Conference in Perth as a joint initiative between the VNCA and the AVA (working together through the National Industry Advisory Group for Veterinary Nursing – NIAG) to recognise those veterinary nurses that have shown currency of skills and dedication to the veterinary nursing profession.

Since launch, veterinary nurses have become AVNs and a number have maintained their accreditation for over ten years.

In April 2019, the VNCA launched the AVNAT Registration Scheme to advocate for the professionalism of veterinary nurses and veterinary technicians working in clinical, management or academic areas.

The AVN Scheme is the gold standard for clinical veterinary nurses.

The AVN is a valuable component of the successful veterinary business and an accredited veterinary nurse will enhance the standard of patient care and boost the professional profile of the practice. Any employee who is an AVN will show to their employer (or prospective employer) a solid commitment to their chosen career.

Potential applicants need to meet the following criteria:

• Full Member of the VNCA
• Hold a Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing or equivalent veterinary nurse/technician qualification for at least one year
• Work in a veterinary practice at Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing level or above for at least one year
• Provide evidence of 30 CPD points in the year prior to applying

The AVN Scheme is managed by the VNCA and applications are assessed by the NIAG once a quarter. Reaccreditation occurs every three years with applicants needing to maintain all initial criteria and provide evidence of 90 points over the three-year period.

Early in 2019, the VNCA expanded the application criteria to include veterinary nurses and technicians that had gained not just a Certificate IV Veterinary Nursing certificate but any other qualification deemed equivalent (https://www.vnca.asn.au/membership/recognised-qualifications/) for the purposes of full VNCA membership and AVNAT registration. This is in line with the VNCA’s assessment of each of the approved qualifications against the Certificate IV and Day One Competency Standards (https://www.vnca.asn.au/public/11/files/Qualifications/VNCA%20Day%20One%20Competency%20Standards%20v1.pdf).

Additional to this, from January 2020 any new or reaccrediting applicant will need to be registered with either the AVNAT Registration Scheme, or the Western Australian Veterinary Surgeons Board.

At the most recent NIAG meeting, the committee agreed that further changes be made to the scheme to assist applicants that wish to be both AVNAT registered and an AVN. The CPD activities that will be accepted for AVN applications will now align to the CPD activities deemed acceptable for AVNAT; however, applicants will still be required to gain 30 points per year or 90 points per 3-year period, whereas AVNAT only requires 20 points per year.

This means that previous exclusion of RACE points for initial accreditation has been removed and caps on the number of points from each category have been lifted, though the caps in the AVNAT policy now apply. These changes were made effective immediately at the last NIAG meeting and applied to the applications being assessed at the August meeting.

In light of this consideration, the CPD approved for AVNAT will now be accepted for the AVN Scheme. This means that any RVN/RVT would require the following to become accredited:

1. Hold and maintain registration, either AVNAT or WA registration (from January 2020)
2. Hold a Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing or equivalent for at least 12 months
3. Gain a total of 30 CPD points per year (20 for AVNAT, plus an additional 10 for AVN)
4. Work as a clinical veterinary nurse in practice, confirmed by employer declaration
5. Be a current Full VNCA Member

These differences between the AVNAT and AVN schemes demonstrate that while the AVNAT Scheme is for all qualified veterinary nurses and veterinary technicians in the industry, the AVN Scheme remains the gold standard for clinical veterinary nurses.

The NIAG invites all employers to recognise current AVN and encourage and support potential AVNs in their application to become Accredited Veterinary Nurses.

If you have become an RVN or RVT, and are wondering what’s next, this is for you! Join the growing list of Accredited Veterinary Nurses who not only support their profession but receive the recognition they deserve. Visit www.vnca.asn.au and follow the links to - My Career - The Accredited Veterinary Nurse.