

## KSVN Fitness to Practise Policy

Please also refer to the RCVS “Fitness to Practise – a guide for UK Providers of Veterinary Nursing Education and Student Veterinary Nurses” document.

The purpose of the KSVN Fitness to Practise Policy is to ensure our students are considered to meet the requirements of the professional status of the Registered Veterinary Nurse. These encompass more than success in the assessments of theory learning and competency in the practical skills of the RCVS Day One Skills. The role of the veterinary nurse requires compassion, confidence and resilience, with good communication skills and to be a committed team player. Veterinary Surgeons will entrust the RVN to follow instructions and perform delegated tasks whilst also knowing when to ask for guidance. Clients will trust the RVN to take good care of their pets. These are all responsibilities to be taken seriously, with integrity, dedication and confidence.

As a training provider, accredited by the awarding organisation and regulatory body of the profession, we are required to address any potential fitness to practice concerns in our students, a responsibility shared jointly with the employer.

## Principles of behaviour for student veterinary nurses

The Fitness to Practise guide prepared by the RCVS refers throughout to the key principles of the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses. The Code & its Supporting Guidance are essential for veterinary nurses in their professional lives & are fundamental to the RCVS regulatory process.

It is important that students recognise that their fitness to practise may be affected by incidences at home, work and in their private lives.



The key principles to consider are extracted from the Code of Professional Conduct’s five principles of practice:

*Professional competence*

*Honesty & integrity*

*Independence & impartiality*

*Client confidence and trust*

*Professional accountability*

The code states the veterinary nurse must not engage in any activity or behaviour that would be likely to bring the reputation into disrepute or undermine public confidence in the profession. This also applies to student veterinary nurses, remembering that wherever a student VN is, they are representing the VN profession, KSVN and their training practice/employer. This includes the student’s public presence, especially on social media. Compliance with Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act is also integral to this Policy, with actions of the student needing to always be linked to their level of knowledge & understanding, competency and responsibility.

Other factors of this policy also include quality communication, discipline & commitment, embracing the concept of mutual respect and working within legal limitations.

**Student's behaviour leading to a negative impact on the following topics would contribute to the review of the individual's fitness to practice:**

Protection of animal welfare

Protection of the public

Proper standards of conduct

Compliance with relevant legislation e.g animal welfare legislation, equality & discrimination legislation

Public confidence in the profession, as represented by student members

The reputation of the profession, as represented by student members

The wider public interest

**Recognition of fitness to practise concerns**

If a risk to the fitness to practise of a student of KSVN becomes a concern, an investigation, including referring to the KSVN Student Disciplinary Process, will be commenced once the following assessments have been made:

Have the minimum professional standards not been met? *E.g. an event has occurred that is fundamentally incompatible with the student one day becoming a registered professional, with certain responsibilities and who works in the public eye.*

Has a basic error of judgement or lack of knowledge brought about the concern? *E.g. a student is not yet a fully-fledged professional and some allowance for mistakes, lack of learning and errors of judgement may be required.*

Did the student knowingly undertake the action? *Was the student aware of the possible implications of their action? Were they aware of the risks involved?*

What would a lay person think of the actions of the student? What would the general public think if the event was not investigated? *The reputation of the profession may be negatively affected.*

Did the student behave recklessly or with deliberate disregard for safety, welfare, or the profession etc. *even if no harm was actually done.*

## Impact of a student's health condition or disability

*Extract taken direct from RCVS Fitness to Practise guide:*

Student veterinary nurses should take responsibility for their own physical and mental health; part of being fit to practise is recognising when your own health has the potential to jeopardise your ability to practise safely and effectively. Registered veterinary nurses have a similar obligation. The Code requires veterinary nurses to take reasonable steps to address adverse physical or mental health or performance that could impair fitness to practise; or, that results in harm, or a risk of harm, to animal health or welfare, public health or the public interest. In addition, veterinary nurses who are concerned about a professional colleague's fitness to practise must take steps to ensure that animals are not put at risk and that the interests of the public are protected.

## Reporting of concerns

Concerns or allegations may be raised by the student themselves; fellow students; the KSVN team, the Training Practice, the Awarding Organisation, other paraprofessionals, members of the public, the police or anonymous sources.

Responsibility for the incident review must be taken as is suitable, dependent on the event and often by the employer or training provider (KSVN) or jointly. Information sharing may be necessary and processes followed e.g disciplinary procedures.

We regard the following KSVN policies and procedures likely to be applicable to Fitness to Practise concerns, all of which are available on the members area of our website or widely distributed to employers & students:

Student Code of Conduct & Disciplinary Procedure Policy; Student Training Contract; Student appendix to the Memorandum of Understanding & the Appeals and Complaints Policy. Additionally, reference will also be made to the VetSkill Operational Guide & other appropriate AO policies as well as the RCVS Fitness to Practice document, referred to here.

## KSVN process of addressing any concerns of fitness to practice

The process is a joint responsibility between training provider and the employer, in most instances. In all cases a thorough, fair and consistent investigation phase will be undertaken and completed prior to any judgement being made, however there may be occasions when for reasons of safety the student may be temporarily suspended from training/employment if the risk of harm to the student or others is considered sufficiently great.

To ensure a fair process, an unbiased investigator/investigation team will gather evidence from all potential sources including the student, the person bringing the concern and any other witnesses. Clear & regular communication with the student is required, throughout the process. Accurate record keeping is essential to enable informed decisions to be made regarding any further actions such as adjudication. Once the investigation is completed a decision is made regarding if adjudication is needed. If agreed to proceed, at this point a panel of suitable individuals is made & presented

with the evidence and the student informed & given opportunity to respond. If a decision is made that the student's fitness to practise is in doubt a suitable sanction will be applied.

During this process support must be made available to the student, in terms of physical and mental health.

The outcome decision could involve:

No sanction

Accepting undertakings from the student

Imposing conditions on the student

Requiring the student to re-take part of the course

Suspending the student from the course

Terminating the student's place on the course.

The whole process should be completed over a reasonable time frame, bearing in mind the impact of lengthy delays on a student's health & training status but also must allow sufficient time to provide a fair & thorough investigation and decision-making process. Any sanctions imposed may need the cooperation of other bodies such as the student's doctor or Clinical Coach etc and will require regular reviews, with clear records kept.

If a sanction is applied, the student is required to declare this when applying to be registered with the RCVS, upon completing their VN qualification. The decision to register the student then remains with the Registrar of the RCVS, who will follow due process.

The Learning Provider/employer are not necessarily required to report a student with an applied Fitness to Practice sanction. If the outcome of the process brings a decision of a serious finding with significant sanctions applied, KSVN will inform the RCVS of the concern & outcome. This would include for example the imposition of certain major, key limitations upon the student and the decision to remove the student from the course. A lesser decision with minor sanctions applied, such as accepting undertakings from the student or imposing minor conditions will not necessarily be reported to the RCVS. Employers are advised to consider similar parameters of reporting but should be aware that if the review of a concern is jointly the responsibility of KSVN & the employer, the details above are the KSVN policy for disclosure of Fitness to Practise outcomes.

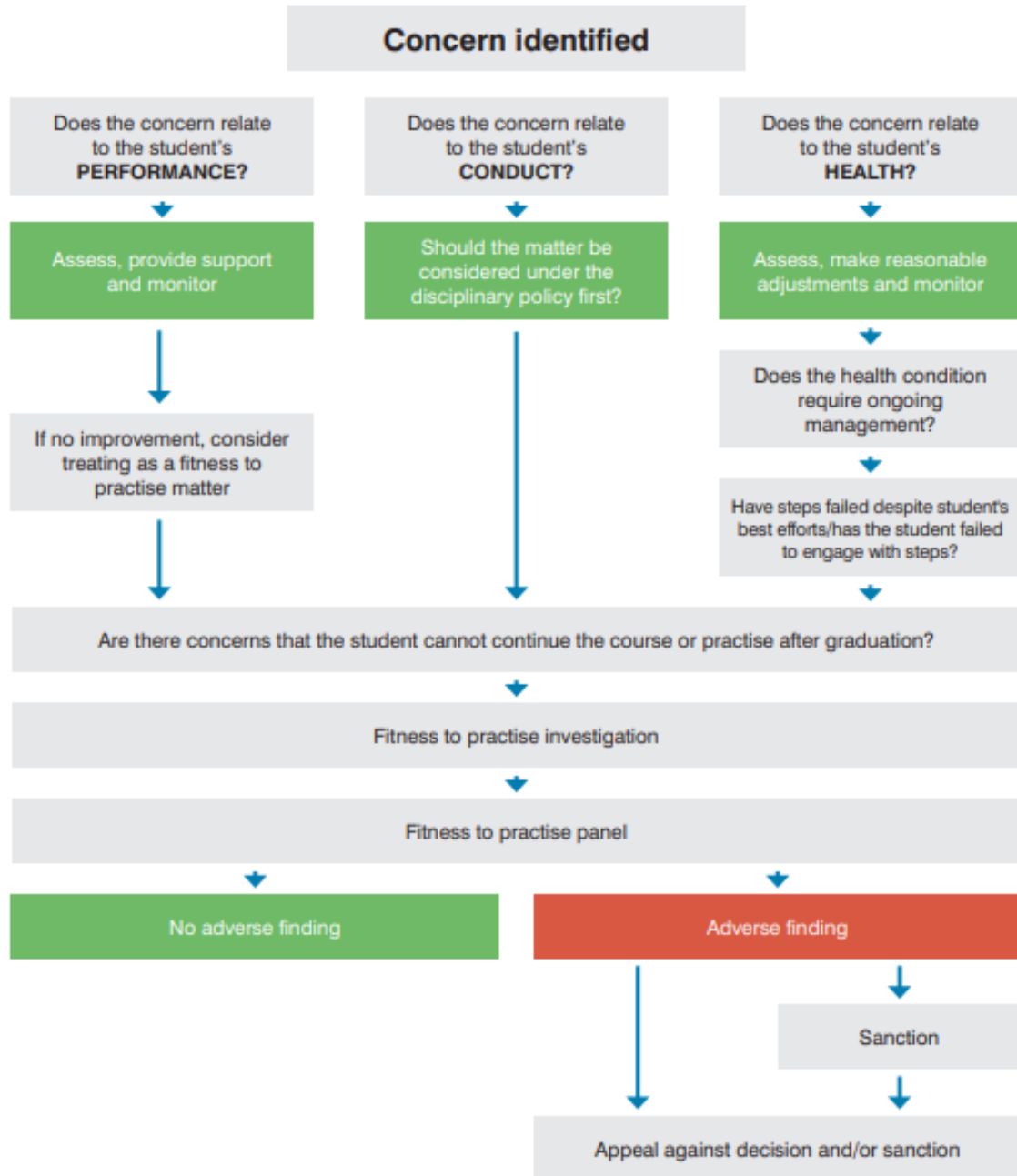
There follows, on the next page the RCVS recommended flow chart for the investigation and evidence review process which will be followed, with reference to the details here & the KSVN Policies mentioned above and any other partner body policies as appropriate e.g. the employer.

Reference & further information:

<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/fitness-to-practise-a-guide-for-uk-providers-of-veterinary>

<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-nurses/>

## Managing different types of concern



■ Finding that may affect registration and which the student must disclose to the RCVS on registration