Admissions Policy and Procedures

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1 General

Scope

This policy covers all undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes for UK, EU and overseas students which lead to approved awards of the Royal Veterinary College.

Purpose

The Royal Veterinary College (RVC) is committed to admitting high-quality students by identifying merit and potential and ensuring that its admissions process is fair and transparent.

The Admissions Policy and Procedures (the Policy) supports the goals, vision and aims of the RVC as laid out in our Strategic Plan. It complies with relevant legislation and is guided by the principles outlined by the Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group, the Office for Students, the Competition and Markets Authority and by the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Advice and Guidance: Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access (2018). In the case of admission to our Veterinary Medicine and Veterinary Nursing courses these policies and procedures are also guided by the principles outlined by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

The Policy is reviewed annually by the Head of Admissions and, where changes are made, the document will be approved by the Taught Programmes Committee (TPAC), the Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC) and Academic Board.

In line with best practice recommendations, this document is intended to provide applicants to the RVC and their advisers with information relating to how admissions processes operate at the RVC and the policies in place surrounding this. Whilst this document contains all of the information and guidance that RVC applicants will require, we recognise the need for the information within it to be accessible at different stages of the applicant journey. Therefore, in addition to being published in its entirety, sections of this document may also be published in relevant locations to ensure transparency and accessibility for all.

Where sections are published independently of the rest of the Policy, these will be updated in line with any changes to the main document.

2 Admissions Statement

The RVC is committed to operating an admissions process which is demonstrably fair, transparent, professional, and underpinned by appropriate and robust institutional structures. Admissions decisions are based on academic potential, irrespective of background.

In support of fair admissions, the RVC strives to:

- ensure that admissions decisions are based on an applicant's achievements and potential.
- embed fair admissions processes both centrally and across the RVC to ensure equality of educational opportunity regardless of the background of applicants.
- promote admissions processes that enable the fair and equitable treatment of each individual applicant without either direct or indirect discrimination.
- give full consideration to applications.
- equally consider all fully completed applications that are received by respective 'on-time' deadlines.
- seek to constantly refine our methods of selection to ensure that they fairly and reasonably discriminate amongst qualified students on the basis of their likely success on the course in question.
- guarantee that admissions decisions are consistent and that each stage of the admissions process is carried out with honesty and integrity by appropriate staff with relevant and up-to-date knowledge and expertise.
- for entry onto our undergraduate courses, create parity of esteem between traditional and other pre-HE qualification routes and fully recognise a wide range of international, access-based, and vocationally-related qualifications, and other indicators of potential;
- ensure the effective operation of the admissions process.
- make explicit the criteria by which admissions decisions are made.
- engage with external communities of students with a view to raising aspirations and encouraging students to realise that higher education is not 'out of reach'.
- clearly document admissions decisions.

3 Entry Requirements

We update our entry requirements on an annual basis in response to changing academic requirements. Inevitably this means that sometimes our requirements do not reflect the information published in the hard copy of our Prospectus (which is usually produced annually). We therefore recommend that applicants look at the information in the course listings on our website (www.rvc.ac.uk) as the source of the most up-to-date information. Our undergraduate academic entry requirements are also published on the UCAS website www.ucas.co.uk.

Entry requirements and available courses for the forthcoming undergraduate admissions cycle will be published on our website from May onwards for undergraduate courses and September onwards for postgraduate courses. In publishing entry requirements at such an early stage there may be need for further changes prior to the start of the application cycle in response to changes that come to light during the examination results period. Changes to our entry requirements will be finalised by the start of the application cycle (by 31st August for undergraduate, 31st October for postgraduate) and will not be changed once the application cycle has begun. Where a course has a non-September start date, it will be subject to different dates and deadlines, but the principles of this policy will still apply.

The RVC considers a wide range of qualifications for entry on to its programmes, taking advice and guidance from sector-wide products and publications such as UK Ecctis, The British Council and UCAS publications, particularly in considering the suitability of international qualifications. Entry requirements are determined based on the academic standard that is needed to successfully complete the course and have been compiled based on our experience of the qualification(s) and the success of students who have previously undertaken the course.

All applicants are expected to demonstrate a suitable standard of English Language proficiency prior to enrolling at the RVC. Applicants who have not achieved the required standard at the point of application may be made an offer that is conditional upon achieving it. Details of the accepted English Language qualifications and the required levels for each qualification will be published on our website.

Applications from candidates without the normal, formal qualifications will be considered on an individual basis and all aspects of the application will be considered when making a decision. All such applications will be considered additionally by the Course Director responsible for the course. Where applications are based on prior experience, the following will apply:

- Any previous study or experience must be cognate with the course the applicant is applying for.
- an applicant's prior learning will be assessed for entry to any programme at whatever level by the relevant Course Director.
- responsibility lies with the applicant in identifying, demonstrating, and providing evidence of any claim of experience or prior learning.
- where it is proposed to allow entry with credit, this will need to be assessed and approved in accordance with the http://www.rvc.ac.uk/Media/Default/About/Academic Quality, Regulations and Procedures/General/Admissions_APL.pdf RVC's Assessment of Prior (Experiential) Learning Policy

However, for courses where there are professional body requirements in place, it may not be possible to consider applications without formal qualifications. Applications will not normally be considered from applicants to our Veterinary Medicine degree who do not have the formal

qualifications required to meet our entry criteria.

The RVC does not place any restrictions on applicants resitting qualifications and applying to any of our other courses.

Undergraduate specific requirements

As a minimum, applicants for full-time undergraduate programmes will normally be expected to have been educated to General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A level) or an equivalent qualification in either the UK or internationally that is deemed acceptable by the RVC.

All applicants for undergraduate programmes are normally required to demonstrate a good standard of general education, normally equivalent to 5 GCSE passes at grades 4 or above (grade A* - C for those candidates with graded GCSEs). This includes acceptable levels of literacy and numeracy, normally equivalent to at least Grade 4 (Grade C) at GCSE in English and Mathematics. Individual programmes may have additional requirements (which may be higher than the RVC minimum), and these are outlined in each programme entry in the Undergraduate Prospectus and on our website.

Where an applicant has not achieved the required GCSE or equivalent grades but has subsequently taken Level 3 qualifications (A-levels or equivalent) which meet our published entry requirements in full and include Biology and Chemistry as discrete subjects with awarded grades, this will be deemed to fulfil the GCSE requirement.

Where a course has additional requirements, such as work experience, these will be published on our website and, for undergraduate courses, the UCAS website. Our website will also detail how to provide evidence of having met the additional requirements to the RVC and any deadline to submit these details. Applicants will be expected to adhere to these deadlines.

All applicants who apply via UCAS to our Veterinary Medicine degrees will be required to submit a form, in addition to their UCAS application. This form will be available to complete via our Applicant Portal. Further details, including the deadline for receipt, will be sent to all applicants once their application has been received and processed into the RVC's system. All applicants to our Gateway course are required, in addition to their UCAS application, to complete a Gateway Supplementary form and submit it to the RVC by a published date, which will normally be seven days after the UCAS deadline.

The RVC will normally only consider two applications to our Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine degree and two applications to our Accelerated Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine per applicant. Applicants who have made two applications to our Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine but have subsequently undertaken a degree in a relevant biological science subject, which would allow entry to our Accelerated Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, will be permitted to make a third application to the course. In the event an applicant submits an application which exceeds the permitted number, the RVC reserves the right to reject the application(s) without any consideration.

The RVC welcomes applications to our Veterinary Medicine degrees from applicants who are resitting whole or parts of their qualifications. In such instances, the RVC sets minimum standards that must have been achieved in the first sitting of the qualification(s) and would normally only permit the qualifications to have been retaken once. These minimum standards will be published on our website.

Postgraduate specific requirements

The minimum entry requirements for admission to a Postgraduate Taught degree at the RVC is normally a UK first or second class honours degree or a recognised international equivalent. Applicants with other qualifications and/or experience will be considered on an individual basis, in accordance with the RVC's Assessment of Prior (Experiential) Learning Policy Entry requirements for each course will be published on the RVC's website.

Admissions Tests

The RVC do not require any supplementary admissions tests for entry to any of its undergraduate courses.

4 Application Processes

All applications to the RVC's undergraduate courses should be made via UCAS, unless the applicant is applying as a graduate from a North American College or University in which case their application should be made via VMCAS. All applications to the RVC's postgraduate courses should be made via the RVC's website.

The RVC adheres to the 'on-time' deadlines provided by UCAS and VMCAS for our courses. Application deadlines may be imposed for postgraduate courses, at the RVC's discretion. In such cases the deadline will be published on the course pages of our website at the beginning of the admissions cycle. Applicants, who submit a full and complete application by the deadline set out for the course they've applied for, will receive full and equal consideration. Applications will only be considered as 'on-time' if they are completed in full by the deadline provided. This includes provision of a personal statement, references and qualification information required to undertake an assessment of the application. Late applications will not normally be considered for our Veterinary Medicine or veterinary nursing courses. Late applications for all other courses will be considered on an individual basis if there are still places available on the relevant programme.

Applications for transfers from other universities will be subject to the RVC's APL procedures. Applications for transfers into our Veterinary Medicine courses from other courses are not permitted. Applications for year 1 entry from those who have already commenced a Veterinary degree elsewhere will only be considered in the event of significant mitigating circumstances.

Applicants who have previously registered on and failed a course will not normally be reconsidered for admission to the same course. Applications will not be accepted from anyone who has previously been a student at the RVC and has had their registration as a student of the RVC terminated for academic/non-academic disciplinary offences. Any such applications that are received will be rejected without consideration.

An applicant who has already obtained an award will only be admitted to a programme at the same level which the RVC has judged to be sufficiently different from that already completed.

Deferred Entry

The RVC welcomes applications from students to taught programmes who wish to undertake a 'gap year' and therefore wish to apply for entry in the following year.
Applicants who apply for deferred entry will be considered using the same criteria as applicants for the current year. The applicant (unless applying through the RVC Early Acceptance Scheme – see below) will be expected to adhere to the relevant application and decision deadlines during the admissions cycle in which they apply. Requests for deferral once an application has been submitted must be made in writing and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Offers of a deferred place will not normally be made in Clearing unless the applicant meets the standard published entry requirements for the course.

Applicants who apply for deferred entry will be contacted in the Spring prior to their entry and will be expected to reconfirm their wish to accept a place, otherwise their application may be withdrawn and offered to another candidate.

Applicants will normally only be permitted to defer for one year. If an applicant wishes to defer for a second year, they will normally be required submit a new application.

Deferred Entry via the RVC Early Acceptance Scheme

The RVC collaborates with a small number of institutions (see below) to facilitate an early acceptance scheme for entry to our Veterinary Medicine degrees.

Where an applicant fulfils the academic and work experience requirements agreed with the partner institution, they will be invited to interview during their penultimate year of study. Applicants under this scheme will be considered using the same interview threshold as applicants for the current year. If, based on their interview, an applicant is eligible for an offer, they will receive an offer for deferred entry, subject to fulfilling our entry requirements on completion of their study. In such cases the applicant will be unable to fulfil the offer in the current admissions cycle and therefore will be permitted to carry their offer over to the following cycle.

Applicants through this scheme will normally only be permitted to hold the deferred offer for one year and will not normally be considered for entry deferred to the year after the completion of their studies. If the applicant is unable to complete their studies in time or wishes to start in subsequent years, they will normally be required to submit a new application.

The Early Acceptance Scheme is only available to applicants studying at an institution with which the RVC holds an agreed partnership. These institutions can be found listed below:

California State Polytechnic, Pomona
Western Kentucky University

5 Selection Processes

The RVC welcomes applications from students who hold a wide range of qualifications, both traditional and non-traditional. Applications are considered on a holistic basis with the entire application being considered when deciding whether to offer an applicant a place.

All applications will be considered in line with the RVC's Equal Opportunities Policy and all decisions will be made in accordance with this Policy.

Communication from/with the RVC

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that they complete any requested documents and/or provide any relevant information by any deadlines requested. Failure to fulfil any such requests may result in the application being unsuccessful.

The RVC uses email as the primary method for contacting applicants about their application. Emails may be sent from either admissions@rvc.ac.uk or myapplication@rvc.ac.uk and applicants are strongly encouraged to take the necessary steps to ensure emails from these addresses do not end up in spam or junk inboxes, as the RVC cannot accept responsibility for any applications that are unsuccessful as a result of missed information or deadlines.

Undergraduate and postgraduate taught degrees

All applications will be considered on an equal basis, against criteria which will be determined at the beginning of the admissions year. When assessing the academic suitability and potential of applicants to undergraduate and postgraduate taught (excluding internships and residencies) courses, we will consider the following information, as provided on the application form and supplementary work experience form, where applicable:

- Achievement in awarded qualifications.
- Predicted achievement in qualifications which are currently being studied.
- Work experience completed (where applicable).
- Personal/supporting statement(s).
- Reference(s).

Contextual data on school attended and HE participation (POLAR4) is used as a part of the selection process for our undergraduate courses. Due to the nature of the course, additional selection methods are used for the Gateway course to ensure that applicants meet the required widening participation criteria.

Where a course requires applicants to attend for interview, this will be published on our website and, for undergraduate courses, the UCAS website.

Internships (PGDip VCP) and Residencies (MVetMed)

When assessing the academic suitability and potential of post graduate clinical training programme applicants, we will consider the following information, as provided on the application form and at interview, where applicable:

- Eligibility for membership of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.
- Personal/supporting statement.
- Reference(s).
- Relevant clinical experience.
- Knowledge of the subject area (MVetMed).

- Discipline-specific technical skills (MVetMed).
- Research experience (MVetMed).
- Completion of a rotating internship programme or equivalent experience (MVetMed).

Postgraduate Research degrees

The policy relating to the admissions of postgraduate research degree candidates can be found within the Code of Practice for Research Degrees located on the Academic Quality, Regulations & Procedures pages of the RVC website under 'Code of Practice' via the following link:

https://www.rvc.ac.uk/about/the-rvc/academic-quality-regulations-procedures#panel-doctoral-programmes-research-degrees

The Code of Practice should be read as well as the this Policy.

Offers

Offers made to applicants will normally be in line with the standard published offer for that course and may not vary significantly from this. Varying levels of offer may be made to take account of individual circumstances, where an applicant is unable to achieve the standard published offer.

All applicants who are successful in gaining an offer of a place at the RVC will be notified of this, in writing (by either email or letter). This represents the formal offering of a place, and a legal contract is formed between the applicant and the RVC on the basis of the terms and conditions of the offer. Applicants who are made an offer of a place will be given a deadline by which to meet the conditions of offer. In the event the applicant does not meet their conditions by the date stated it may not be possible to hold their offer of a place open.

All offers are made subject to Occupational Health (OH) clearance and applicants will not be permitted to enrol with the RVC if they have not completed the OH process and been cleared as fit to study. Applicants will be sent a questionnaire, from the RVC's OH provider, during the admissions process, once they have firmly accepted an offer of a place.

If the RVC is unable to make an applicant an offer of a place on their chosen course, it may be possible to make an offer on a similar alternative course. This may happen at both the initial offer stage and at 'Confirmation' once results are known. If this is the case a change of course offer will be made, and the applicant will be notified of this.

Applicants who fail to meet their conditions of offer by a small margin may be considered at 'Confirmation' subject to available space on the course, once those who have met their offer have been accepted. Applicants who fail to achieve the RVC's minimum entry requirements will not normally be accepted (see entry requirements).

The RVC may consider undergraduate applicants with qualifications that are lower than the published standard entry requirements at 'Clearing', should a course still have vacancies. Applicants who fail to meet the RVC's minimum entry requirements will not normally be accepted at 'Clearing' (see entry requirements).

Interviews

Where a course requires an interview as a part of the selection process this will be detailed on our website and the UCAS website (if applicable) at the start of the admissions cycle for that given year.

Where an interview is required for the course, arrangements will be made for international students and those students who are not currently resident in the UK. Interviews for the Veterinary Medicine courses will normally be held in North America and Asia, in addition to the UK, and applicants resident in these locations will normally be expected to attend in person. Where an applicant has mitigating circumstances which mean they are unable to attend in person, interviews will be conducted either online or by telephone, where appropriate. In some cases, legal or regulatory requirements may mean this option is not available. All applicants to a course will be interviewed in the same format, irrespective of when and where they are interviewed.

Where an interview is required to determine suitability for a course, the following will be adhered to:

- The interviewer(s) will have received appropriate training on conducting fair and effective recruitment and selection processes and the objectives and aims of the RVC's interview processes.
- The interview will be conducted in accordance with the RVC's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- All applicants will be assessed against a standard set of criteria and assessment forms will be completed for each candidate.

The RVC will provide applicants with an indication of likely interview dates via our website at the beginning of each admissions cycle, although such dates are subject to change.

Applicants will normally be given at least two weeks' notice of their interview date although there are occasions where this may not be possible. If an applicant is unable to attend on the date provided, reasonable steps will be taken to rearrange the interview and where this will not be possible (e.g., if they are invited to attend the final interview date for the year), this will be made clear to the applicant. Due to the competitive nature of the courses, it will not normally be possible to rearrange an interview more than once.

Where an applicant has applied to more than one of our Veterinary Medicine degrees (Gateway to Veterinary Medicine, BVetMed, BVetMed with Intercalated Year or Accelerated Veterinary Medicine), they will only be called to interview once. Interviews for these courses are skills and attributes based and therefore are the same across all courses. Where an applicant has applied to more than one course, their interview score will be allocated to each course application. Each application will be considered independently and against the scores of other interviewees for that course, except for the BVetMed and BVetMed with Intercalated Year. The BVetMed and BVetMed with Intercalated Year are admitted to the same cohort and therefore applications to both courses are considered within the same applicant pool.

Where an applicant has applied to both veterinary nursing degrees they will only be called to interview once. In such instances the applicant's interview performance will be considered against both courses and in comparison to the other applicants to each course.

If an applicant fails to respond to an invitation to interview, their application will normally be withdrawn. In the event an applicant fails to attend their interview they will not normally be offered a second date, unless they provide evidence of mitigating circumstances that prevented them from attending.

If an applicant is invited to the final interview date of the year and is prevented from attending due to circumstances outside of their control (for example, unexpected hospitalisation), an alternative interview will be offered, where possible. If this is not possible or the applicant is unable to attend the alternative, they will be offered the opportunity to reapply in the following year without penalty. On receipt of the application, they will be offered a guaranteed interview, subject to meeting the published entry criteria. Such provision will only apply where the applicant had committed to attending but was prevented from doing so and evidence to support this will be required. Holidays, attendance at other interview days or similar circumstances will not be accepted.

Where an applicant requires any adjustments or special arrangements at interview, it is the responsibility of the applicant to contact the Admissions Office, upon receipt of an invitation to interview, to discuss these further. Arrangements and/or adjustments can only be made following discussions with the applicant and, where applicable, the RVC's Disability Officer and cannot be made solely on the basis of information provided during the application stage. The RVC reserves the right to request additional documentation in support of an adjustment request, such as a Special Educational Needs (SEN) assessment. Where the interviewing course is a professional course, applicants should be aware that there may be limitations to adjustments that can be made.

The RVC does not routinely refund the costs applicants may incur when travelling to an interview. If refunds are available this will be made clear when applicants are invited to an interview.

The RVC reserves the right, in the case of highly qualified international applicants, to waive the requirement of an interview where it is logistically problematic to conduct.

Arrangements for Applicants who are under 18

The majority of students at RVC are 18 or above, and the academic life and social environment of the RVC reflects this. However, we recognise that some individuals who have already met the entry requirements for the programme are in a position to commence their university studies at a younger age.

The RVC strongly recommends that applicants who will be under 17 years of age on entry consider carefully whether they would be able to benefit fully from the educational and social opportunities which are on offer.

Applicants who will be under 18 years of age on the published start date of the programme, and their parents and guardians, must complete an Under 18 Agreement as a condition of offer which confirms:

- that they understand the nature of the RVC and the programme, the circumstances in which the individual would be studying and living, and the limitations of the RVC's supervisory role.
- that the contractual arrangements for the individual to study at the RVC are underwritten by a qualified person of adult status.
- that arrangements would be in place to support the individual in an emergency, including the existence of a qualified person in the UK willing to act as guardian.
- that the individual will obey the restrictions that English law places on minors.

Applicants with Criminal Convictions

Our Veterinary Medicine and Veterinary Nursing degrees both lead to qualification in professions which fall under the Notifiable Occupations Scheme. All veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses must disclose any caution or conviction, including absolute and conditional discharges or adverse findings, whether in the UK or overseas (except for minor offences excluded from disclosure) to the RCVS upon registration and any new convictions annually. Veterinary surgeons must also disclose any spent convictions.

In line with RCVS protocols, a part of the admissions process, all applicants to the Veterinary Medicine and Veterinary Nursing courses will be required to declare any relevant criminal convictions to the RVC. Relevant criminal convictions are defined as: those convictions for offences against the person, whether of a violent or sexual nature, and convictions for offences involving unlawfully supplying controlled drugs or substances where the conviction concerns commercial drug dealing or trafficking. Applicants to Veterinary Medicine must also disclose any spent convictions.

Applicants will be required to provide this information as a condition of their offer. They will not be required to provide this before receiving an offer although may contact us, should they wish to discuss their situation prior to application.

Any applicant who declares a criminal conviction as a part of the admissions process will be asked to provide further information about the offence(s). The declaration will then be assessed by a panel relevant to the course they have applied to, which will be convened by the Head of Admissions. The panel will consider whether the applicant will be able to practise in the profession upon successful completion of the course and guidance may be sought from the RCVS.

Applicants to our other courses will not be required to provide information about any criminal convictions they may have for the purpose of admission to that course.

Applicants with disabilities

All applicants should declare any disability on their application so that the RVC is aware of the support required at the earliest opportunity. Consideration of applicants who declare a disability will be based on the same criteria and principles as for other candidates. Interviews/selection days are designed to be accessible to all and therefore, should an applicant who has declared a disability be invited to interview, adjustments will be made, where reasonable, in consultation with the RVC's Disability Officer (see interview section above for further information). Applicants who require adjustments or assistance when attending an interview/selection day or a Visit or Open Day must contact Admissions Office to discuss their needs in advance of the day to enable necessary arrangements to be made.

Reasonable adjustments will, where possible, be made for disabled applicants in conjunction with the Advice Centre to enable them to successfully complete their chosen course. Applicants who require adjustments and further support are encouraged to contact the Advice Centre to discuss these further.

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) and Fitness to practise

Graduation from the RVC's Veterinary Medicine degrees and veterinary nursing degrees leads to automatic membership of the RCVS and the legal right to practise as a veterinary surgeon/nurse in the UK. The RVC must therefore ensure that anyone admitted to these courses can fulfil the prescribed professional standards, as set out by the RCVS. For some

applicants to these courses, a health condition or disability may affect their ability to undertake the course or practise. In such cases it may not be possible to implement reasonable adjustments and therefore their application would be unsuccessful.

All applications to the RVC will initially be considered on academic grounds. Any applicant who is successful at being selected for interview but that has declared a disability which could impact their ability to study and/or practise will then be contacted for further information and, where necessary, referred to either our Disability Advisor and/or our Occupational Health Advisor. In most cases it is hoped that a final decision can be reached ahead of the interview process but there may be occasions where it is necessary to invite the applicant to interview before a final decision has been determined.

Applicants to our Veterinary Medicine courses should refer to the RCVS Fitness to Practise - A Guide for UK Veterinary Schools and Veterinary Students and the RCVS Day One Competences as these outline essential competencies that a qualifying veterinarian must be able to undertake. They may also wish to read the HEOPS (Higher Education Occupational Practitioners) guidance on assessing veterinary students fitness to train.

Applicants to our veterinary nursing courses should refer to the RCVS Fitness to Practise: A Guide for UK Providers of Veterinary Nursing Education and Student Veterinary Nurses and the RCVS Day One Competences for Veterinary Nurses as these outline essential competencies that a qualifying veterinary nurse must be able to undertake.

Fraudulent and Misleading Applications

The RVC reserves the right to cancel any application found to contain fraudulent or misleading information. In the event that an offer of a place has been made, the offer will be withdrawn. Should an applicant omit any relevant information from their application, the RVC reserves the right to treat this as a fraudulent application and thus cancel the application and withdraw any offer of a place.

Where the RVC is notified that an applicant has been highlighted under the UCAS similarity detection service, their application will continue to be assessed under the standard assessment process. Such applicants will be contacted and advised of the serious nature of plagiarism and a note will remain on file, but no further action will be taken.

Applications from postgraduate students that are found to be plagiarised will be treated as fraudulent. Such applications will be cancelled, and any offer of a place withdrawn.

Applicants will normally be asked to provide evidence of their qualifications, as stated on their application form, at either interview or enrolment. This requirement will be waived if their qualifications have been previously verified by either UCAS or VMCAS. Any applicant who is unable to produce evidence of their qualifications when requested will not be permitted to enrol.

If a student is subsequently found to have gained their place at the RVC on the basis of fraudulent information their registration will be declared void and they may be subject to the RVC's disciplinary processes.

Subsequent applications from anyone previously found to have submitted fraudulent information to the RVC will not be accepted, and such applications will be rejected.

Use of AI in Personal, Supplementary and Supporting Statements

The RVC recognises that AI tools can be useful to applicants when writing personal and supplementary statements and can be beneficial in providing a starting base and structure. We do, however, expect all elements of an application to be the applicant's own work and applicants are required to confirm this as a part of their declaration when they submit their application. As such, any personal or supplementary statement that is largely or completely generated using AI software would be considered as plagiarised and we reserve the right to treat this as a fraudulent application and thus cancel the application and withdraw any offer of a place.

Mitigating/Extenuating Circumstances

Any applicant who feels that they have mitigating/extenuating circumstances which need to be disclosed to the RVC should do so, by letter to the Applicant Services Manager, ensuring that any relevant supporting information is enclosed (e.g., medical documentation). Where mitigating/extenuating circumstances are in connection with a qualification or its results, the applicant should include a letter from their school or college in addition to any further supporting information.

Applicants should ensure that the relevant exam board is notified of any mitigating/extenuating circumstances, prior to the issue of results. The RVC should also be notified of any mitigating/extenuating circumstances prior to the issue of results. It may not be possible to give any consideration to mitigating/extenuating circumstances divulged after the issue of results.

The RVC reserves the right to assume that the relevant exam board has taken account of mitigating/extenuating circumstances and therefore that appropriate adjustments have been made and are reflected in the results. The RVC may further consider an applicant's mitigating/extenuating circumstances, upon receipt of results, if the applicant has narrowly failed to achieve their offer but there is no guarantee of amendment to a decision as a result.

Re-marks and Examination Appeals

Applicants who have applied for a re-mark or appeal with an awarding body should notify the RVC immediately. While the RVC will make every effort to reconsider applicants whose grades are amended as the result of a successful re-mark, it may not always be possible to hold an offer open pending the outcome of an appeal.

In the event that a re-mark is successful and the course applied to is full, an applicant may be offered an alternative programme or a deferred entry place.

6 Fee Status

As a part of the initial selection process, all applicants will be assessed to determine their fee status, based on the information provided on their application. Fee status is determined by rules set out by the UK Government, detailed guidance on these can be found on the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) website.

Where it is not possible to determine an applicant's fee status from the information provided in their application, they may be asked to complete a fee status questionnaire. Applicants will normally be contacted prior to interview to determine and resolve their fee status. Where an applicant fails to respond to our request to complete a fee status questionnaire, their application (and offer of a place, if applicable) may be withdrawn.

All applicants will be required to provide a copy of their passport as a part of their fee status application to confirm their nationality. Claims for Home fee status must be accompanied by relevant supporting evidence. Where an applicant is unable to provide supporting evidence, the RVC reserves the right to determine that the applicant is an overseas fee payer.

Once resolved, applicants will be notified of their assessed fee status, in writing (usually by email). Should an applicant wish to appeal this decision they should do so, in writing, within 14 days of the notification and prior to accepting any offer. Such appeals should be directed to the Admissions Office. Any appeal must outline the basis on which the applicant believes the decision is incorrect (with reference to the relevant guidance) and provide evidence (if appropriate) to support this. If an applicant appeals after the 14 days has passed and the decision is revised, their application may be reassessed and the RVC's offer may be changed or withdrawn.

Where an applicant is not requested to complete a fee status questionnaire but believes that the fee assessment, as detailed in their offer email, is incorrect they should notify the Admissions Office. This must be done in writing, within 14 days of receipt of the offer and prior to accepting any offer. If the decision is revised as a result of information not provided on the initial application, the application may be reassessed and the RVC's offer may be changed or withdrawn.

Applicants should notify the Admissions Office immediately if their circumstances change (or are likely to change) which may impact their fee assessment. Should an applicant provide information that may result in a change in the assessment of their fee status, they will be asked to complete a fee status questionnaire to enable the RVC determine which fees they should pay. If the RVC revises its assessment on the basis of new or further information provided with a review, the application may be reassessed and the RVC's offer may be changed or withdrawn.

It is not possible for a student's fee status assessment to change once they have enrolled onto their course at the RVC unless their circumstances change, as permitted by the rules set out by the UK Government.

7 Contextual Data

The RVC is committed to undertaking a holistic approach to the assessment of our applicants to enable us to identify those with the potential to succeed. Contextual information provides us with information relating to an applicant's educational and socio-economic circumstances, allowing us to take into account challenges they have faced during their education and the potential impact of these on their performance.

As such, contextual data may be considered in relation to all UK domiciled, home (UK) students who are applying for undergraduate programmes. EU and/or international students who trigger any contextual data indicators will be considered on an individual basis and outside the scope of this policy.

The following principles and statements of intent apply to the use of contextual data in the admissions process:

- There are no quotas for recruiting students from any particular background. Whilst the RVC, like all Higher Education providers, does have agreed milestones with the Office for Students (OfS) for the recruitment, retention and performance of students from a range of backgrounds, these are not employed as quotas in the admissions process.
- Contextual data is used only to complement and enhance existing selection mechanisms, including the consideration of academic qualifications, and does not replace these methods.
- Contextual data is used as part of the overall consideration of an applicant and not in isolation; a combination of various items of contextual data are used, in addition to various factors from the application, in order to arrive at a holistic assessment of the applicant's potential for the course for which they have applied.
- Contextual data informs but does not over-rule the process of professional judgement which ultimately decides whether an invitation to interview is made and whether subsequently an offer of a place is made.
- The meeting of any of the RVC's contextual data triggers does not offer any guarantee of an invitation to interview or offer of a place on the course.
- All admissions staff using contextual data in decision making are briefed fully and made aware of the issues surrounding contextual data to ensure that they understand, and can interpret and use the data appropriately.
- Contextual data may be used, for all courses, as a part of the process of determining whether to accept an applicant who has not met the terms of their offer, in the summer, once results are known and subject to vacancies on the course.
- The RVC will keep its policy for the use of contextual date under review and up-date this policy statement when changes are agreed. In doing so, we will refer to relevant internal and external reference points.

Use of contextual data

All applicants will be screened at the point of assessment to see whether, based on the information provided on their UCAS form, any of the contextual indicators are applicable to them. If an applicant has failed to declare any information on their UCAS form that is used to determine whether they meet a contextual data trigger, this cannot be considered unless their UCAS form is subsequently amended. Until this point, the applicant will be considered as not meeting that trigger. Where possible we will reassess an applicant who subsequently declares information that may trigger a contextual data indicator, however this is subject to timing (for example, we will not be able to consider an applicant if the interviews for the course have already concluded) and vacancies remaining on the course in question.

The following contextual data indicators are currently in use as a part of our assessment

process:

- Contextual School
- POLAR score
- IMD score
- Parental income
- Care leaver
- Parental HE attendance
- RVC Sutton Trust summer school attendee
- Free school meals eligibility

Whilst the above list represents all indicators currently in use, they may not all be in use for all courses. Information will be published on our website to indicate whether a course is using such indicators and, if so, which indicators are in use.

Applicants to our Veterinary Gateway course will be required to complete a Gateway Supplementary form in addition to their UCAS application form, to enable a full assessment of their application to be undertaken.

Contextual Data Definitions

RVC Contextual Schools

RVC contextual schools at level 2 will be determined based upon the percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A* to C/4 or above including English and Maths at each school plus equivalent data in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Schools will be listed as a contextual school if they score below the national average in this measure.

RVC contextual schools at level 3 will be determined based on the average point score per academic entry, plus equivalent data in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Schools will be listed as a contextual school if they score below the national average in this measure.

RVC contextual schools at both level 2 and level 3 will be compiled utilising the last three years of performance data available for each level to minimise the impact of any fluctuations in data. The 'average' performance will be determined from the average percentage score in the most recent year of available data. Where insufficient data is available to enable a three-year average, the available data will be considered to see if there is sufficient consistency to make a decision. If a decision is not possible, the school will not be considered a contextual school. In such cases our decision may be reconsidered if the school is able to provide further information relating to the anomalies.

A list of contextual schools will be published on the RVC website each year and will be available from the May prior to the application cycle opening (normally September 12 months before the start of the course). This list will be relevant to applicants who are applying in that application cycle having completed their GCSE and A-levels (or equivalent) in the years immediately prior to application. Where an applicant has sat their qualifications in a non-standard duration, they will be considered against the data most appropriate to the year in which they completed their qualifications and should contact the Admissions Office for further guidance. For the purpose of definition, the RVC expects that GCSE and A-level study (or equivalent) will be two years each in duration. To be considered under the contextual flag, an applicant should have studied for a full two years at the school and at the relevant qualification level. Where an applicant does not fulfil this criterion but has completed the two years of study solely at schools that have the contextual flag, this will be deemed acceptable.

POLAR Score

An applicant's POLAR (Participation of Local Areas) score will be determined using the most up-to-date POLAR information (currently POLAR4) from the OfS, based on the home address provided on their UCAS application. For further information see: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/search-by-postcode/

IMD Score

An applicant's IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation) score will be determined using the most up to date IMD information (currently IMD2019) from UK Government, based on the home address provided on their UCAS application. For assessment purposes the RVC will consider the data based on quintiles. For further information see:

England: http://imd-by-postcode.opendatacommunities.org/imd/2019
Wales: https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Welsh-Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation
Scotland: https://simd.scot/
Northern Ireland: https://deprivation.nisra.gov.uk

Low Income

Applicants will only be considered as meeting these criteria if they are able to produce a government completed assessment of the household income that demonstrates that they are in receipt of a means tested benefit. P60s and wage slips cannot be accepted as evidence of household income as they do not confirm that this is the total income for everyone living in the household.

For an applicant's income to be assessed in lieu of their parental income they must meet the Student Finance England definition of an independent student and be eligible for assessment by Student Finance as an independent student. Further information can be obtained at https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/loans-and-grants

Care Leaver

The RVC is committed to the Buttle Trust definition of a care leaver. We therefore deem a care leaver to be an applicant who has been looked after (in care) for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14.

RVC Sutton Trust Summer School Attendee

The applicant has attended the RVC Sutton Trust Summer School.

Parental Higher Education attendance

Applicants whose biological parents and/or step-parents and/or guardians have no higher education qualifications, such as a degree, diploma or certificate of higher education, and this has been declared on their UCAS application. Where there has been long-term estrangement from a second parent, step-parent or guardian who has a higher education qualification, the RVC will consider individuals on a case-by-case basis.

Free School Meals Eligibility

Applicants will only be considered as meeting this criterion if they indicate that they have been in receipt of free school meals on their UCAS application and the RVC is able to verify this. For applicants resident in England, the RVC will be able to verify this automatically with data received from the Department for Education (via UCAS). For applicants resident in Northern

Ireland, Scotland or Wales, the applicant will be required to provide additional evidence to confirm this (this will be requested by the RVC if applicable).

8 Feedback and Complaints

The RVC is committed to providing a high quality, fair and transparent admissions service for all applicants. We recognise, however, that there will be occasions when applicants may wish to establish why their application has been rejected or believe that they have cause for complaint. Applicants have no right of appeal against a decision not to offer them a place at the RVC.

In this context, **feedback** is defined as the communication from the RVC to an applicant, on request from the applicant, who has been unsuccessful in gaining an offer of a place. A **complaint** is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction either about the way in which an application (including an interview) has been handled or the outcome of the selection or fees classification process. In either case, it may concern actions or inaction by the RVC or its staff. An **appeal** is defined as a request for a formal review of the outcome of an admissions decision.

Feedback

The RVC is committed to providing all applicants who are unsuccessful at gaining an offer of a place with a reason for this decision.

Due to the large number of applications received, it is not possible to provide each unsuccessful applicant with detailed, personal feedback for an unsuccessful application. The RVC makes great efforts to provide clear minimum entry requirements for all its courses. For undergraduate courses, these can be found in our Prospectus (paper and online), on our website, on our UCAS Entry Profiles. The RVC expects applicants to have read the available information on entry requirements and assessment criteria before requesting further feedback, as in many cases this will explain why their application has been unsuccessful.

Applicants who are unsuccessful at gaining an offer of a place on our undergraduate programmes following an interview will be provided with feedback within six weeks of the decision being made. The feedback will provide information on their performance in each interview task to enable them to determine where they might strengthen a future application. It is not normally possible to provide any further feedback to applicants on their interview performance. Applicants who are unsuccessful at gaining an offer of a place on all other programmes following interview will only be provided with feedback on request.

Requests for further, individual, feedback for non-interviewing courses and for interviewing courses where the applicant has been rejected prior to interview must be made by the applicant and should be sent to the Admissions Office within eight weeks of the notification of an unsuccessful application. Where applicable, further information will be sought from the Academic Department before providing feedback.

In some cases, an offer may not have been made due to the level of competition for places rather than any specific weakness in an application, and consequently, we will not be able to advise applicants on how to strengthen any subsequent application. In all cases, it will be made clear to the applicant that, even if another application will be considered, there is no guarantee that an offer will be made, even if the points raised in the feedback are addressed by the applicant. There will be no discrimination against any applicant who has applied previously (except where a limit is placed on the number of permitted applications) or where the applicant has requested feedback.

Requests for feedback from a third party will not be accepted and no information relating to an individual applicant will be released, even if those requesting this information have been named as an appropriate contact by the applicant.

Further correspondence will not be entered into, and the decision will not be reviewed. If the applicant feels the admissions process has not been followed correctly, they must use the complaints procedure.

Complaints

Applicants have no right of appeal against a decision not to offer them a place at the RVC. Provided that the decision can be shown to have been reached fairly and in accordance with the RVC's published selection criteria, the original decision will not be overturned.

However, should an applicant believe that the RVC's Admissions Principles and Procedures have been inconsistently or incorrectly applied, this complaints procedure provides a mechanism for objective review for both undergraduate and postgraduate taught applicants.

Complaints may only be made by individual applicants. They may not be made by a representative, a parent, a school or any other third party.

This procedure sets out how applicants may seek to have a complaint addressed. It should be recognised that the vast majority of applicant complaints can be handled fairly, amicably, and to the satisfaction of all concerned without recourse to the formal complaints procedure. The complaints procedure provides for both informal and formal stages in the handling of a complaint. At each stage of the process, the person to whom the complaint has been referred shall, if it is upheld, wholly or in part, apply such remedies as are within her/his powers. If they consider that the remedy is outside their powers, they shall refer the matter to the appropriate authority. If they feel unable to fulfil the requirements of the complaints procedure objectively because of prior involvement in the case, they will refer the matter to a more senior colleague.

In the first instance, applicants with a complaint should raise it informally with the Admissions Office, using the Admissions email address (admissions@rvc.ac.uk). If this course of action proves unsatisfactory, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed (see below).

The RVC will seek to ensure that all complaints are treated seriously and constructively. It will also seek to ensure that complaints are dealt with promptly, with fairness and consistency and with due regard to the RVC's Equal Opportunities Policy. If a complaint is upheld, the RVC will take such action or provide such remedy as may be appropriate and will do so promptly. If a complaint is not upheld, the reasons for the decision will be communicated to the applicant.

There will be no discrimination against any applicant who makes a complaint. Applicants lodging a complaint and those against whom complaints are made may expect complaints to be dealt with confidentially and with respect for their privacy. However, it may be necessary to disclose information to others in order to deal with the complaint.

Anonymous complaints will not be dealt with under this procedure. Staff who receive anonymous complaints will be expected to use their discretion and judgement as to how to handle such complaints.

Formal complaints procedure

Applicants are expected to have sought to resolve their complaint informally before following the formal complaints procedure. Where an applicant submits a formal complaint but has not sought to resolve the complaint informally, the complaint will normally be referred to the Admissions Team in the first instance for informal resolution.

If a complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily on an informal basis, the applicant should write to the Applicant Services Manager, outlining the nature, details of their complaint and the steps taken to resolve the complaint informally. Formal complaints will only be accepted in writing and not via the telephone.

The complaint must normally be made within 14 days of the actions (or lack of actions) that prompted the complaint. The Applicant Services Manager will investigate the complaint in consultation with the relevant members of staff and will respond to the complaint normally within 10 working days of a complaint being made. The Applicant Services Manager will retain a record of the correspondence and any action taken. If it proves impossible to respond fully within 10 working days, the complainant will be informed of the timescale for the receipt of a full response.

If the complaint is about non-selection, the Applicant Services Manager must be satisfied that the application was considered fairly, and that the decision did comply with the selection policy. Provided that they are satisfied that this is the case, a response explaining the context of the decision (e.g., demand for places) and the selection policy that has been applied is acceptable at this stage.

Appealing the outcome of a complaint

Undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses

If the applicant is dissatisfied with the response they receive from the Applicant Services Manager, they should submit a written appeal to the Head of Admissions, within 10 working days of receiving the response. This should briefly detail: the nature of the complaint; the informal steps already taken (if any); details of the response received; and a statement as to why the applicant remains dissatisfied and, without prejudice to any formal remedy which might be determined, the remedy which they are seeking. The Head of Admissions will investigate the complaint and submit a written response to the complainant, normally within 15 working days of the receipt of the complaint. If it should prove impossible to respond fully within 15 working days, the applicant shall be informed in writing of the timescale for the receipt of a full response.

The Head of Admissions' decision following completion of this process will be considered as final.

9 Applicant and enquirer data

For the purpose of this section, an applicant is defined as someone who has submitted an application to the RVC and an enquirer is someone who is potentially interested in submitting an application to the RVC but has not yet done so.

To successfully manage and monitor our admissions and enrolment processes at the RVC, we need to collect a range personal of data from both our enquirers and applicants. All data will be collected in accordance with our legal obligations. Full details can be found in our Student Privacy Policy, as published on our website.

Where an enquirer contacts the RVC to request information about our course(s) or the RVC or submits a Prospectus request, their details (subject to their approval) will be held in our customer relationship management system (CRM) to enable monitoring of progression and to inform future recruitment or widening participation activities. They may opt out of this at any time by emailing admissions@rvc.ac.uk.

In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 1998, the RVC will not enter into any discussion relating to an application with anyone other than the applicant, unless the applicant has provided written permission to do so. Where an applicant has nominated a named person on their UCAS form, this will be accepted as written permission to speak to the named person.

Communication with applicants will predominantly be made via email however we may also contact applicants via letter, telephone or SMS. For applicants who have applied via UCAS, updates of their application will, where possible, be made via the Track facilities in addition to via RVC communications. Emails may be sent from either admissions@rvc.ac.uk or myapplication@rvc.ac.uk and applicants are strongly encouraged to take the necessary steps to ensure emails from these addresses do not end up in spam or junk inboxes

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their contact details are kept up to date at all times. The RVC cannot be responsible for any messages not received due to inaccurate contact details or emails being incorrectly identified as spam.