



Qualification Specification

GA Level 2 Diploma for Veterinary Care Assistants (Small Animals) (610/5352/1)

This qualification is subject to the GA Centre Assessment and Standards Scrutiny and General Moderation policy.

Section 1: Qualifications Overview

1.1 Introduction: About this Qualification

Gatehouse Awards (GA) qualifications are designed to give candidates the skills to be active in the modern labour market and progress in their career and/or into higher level study.

This specification covers the GA Level 2 Diploma for Veterinary Care Assistants (Small Animals) (610/5352/1).

This document provides centre staff, candidates and employers with an overview of the qualification content as well as the assessment and quality assurance requirements for this qualification.

This qualification is regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulations (Ofqual) in England and is part of the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). All versions of this qualification are listed on the Register of Regulated Qualifications which is operated by Ofqual at <http://register.ofqual.gov.uk>.

This qualification is not designed to replace an existing qualification.

1.2 Association of Veterinary Animal Care Assistants (AVACA)



This course has been endorsed by the Association of Veterinary Animal Care Assistants (AVACA), a membership association committed to supporting the role of veterinary care assistants. AVACA does this through training, education, and development, improving the standards of welfare and communication within practices, to the benefit of clients, patients, and colleagues.

Learners completing the GA Level 2 Diploma for Veterinary Care Assistants will be awarded with a year's free membership of AVACA. AVACA incorporates a wealth of resources for both the individual VCAs as well as those who train and support them. AVACA also provides a community for VCAs, and associated roles.

- Association of Veterinary Animal Care Assistants (AVACA)

1.3 Qualification Title, Qualification Number and Important Dates

Qualification Title and Level	Qualification Number	Operational Start Date	Operational Review Date
GA Level 2 Diploma for Veterinary Care Assistants (Small Animals)	610/5352/1	24/02/2025	Feb 2030

1.3 Qualification Aims and Objectives

In the GA Level 2 Diploma for Veterinary Care Assistants (Small Animals), learners will explore veterinary nursing and animal care, covering essential aspects such as anatomy and physiology, animal nutrition, and husbandry. They will explore common small animal diseases and conditions, and learn emergency and first aid care. The qualification also develops knowledge and understanding of surgical assistance, anaesthesia, diagnostic procedures, and medical imaging so that Veterinary Care Assistants are fully prepared for their role.

Learners will also develop skills in client communication, record keeping, and professional development. Practical experience in handling, restraint techniques, and veterinary nursing tasks will be provided to ensure comprehensive care and support in a veterinary setting.

It is an ideal qualification for individuals seeking a career as a veterinary nursing assistant, offering a solid foundation for working in various veterinary practices and animal care environments.

1.4 Qualification Structure and Overview: Units, GLH, TQT, Level and Credit Value

The structure of this qualification is as follows:

GA Level 2 Diploma for Veterinary Care Assistants (Small Animals) (610/5352/1)				
Mandatory Units	Unit Reference	Credits	GLH*	Study Time**
1. Introduction to Veterinary Nursing and Animal Care	Y/651/4957	5	30	50
2. Anatomy and Physiology for Veterinary Care Assistants	A/651/4958	6	50	60
3. Small Animal Nutrition and Husbandry	D/651/4959	3	22	30

4. Common Small Animal Diseases and Conditions	J/651/4960	4	26	40
5. First Aid and Emergency Protocols	K/651/4961	2	16	20
6. Supporting Surgical Procedures	L/651/4962	4	32	40
7. Diagnostic Procedures and Medical Imaging	M/651/4963	3	20	30
8. Client Communication and Record Keeping	R/651/4964	3	20	30
9. Professional Development and Career Pathways	T/651/4965	2	10	20
10. Principles of Small Animal Handling and Restraint	Y/651/4966	3	17	30
11. Practical Veterinary Care and Support	A/651/4967	7	60	70
		Total Credits 42	Total GLH* 303	GLH + Study Time = TQT** 420

*Guided Learning Hours (GLH): Definition

The activity of a learner in being taught or instructed by – or otherwise participating in education or training under the immediate guidance or supervision of – a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.

**Total Qualification Time (TQT): Definition

The number of Guided Learning Hours assigned, plus an estimate of the number of study hours a learner will reasonably be likely to spend in preparation, study or any other form of participation in education or training, including assessment, which takes place as directed by – but, unlike Guided Learning, not under the immediate guidance or supervision of a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.

The number of study hours a learner is expected to undertake in order to complete each unit is expressed in the **‘Study Time’** above. This, including the GLH, provides the Total Qualification Time, or TQT, and represents an estimate of the total amount of time that could

reasonably be expected to be required in order for a learner to achieve and demonstrate the achievement of the level of attainment necessary for the award of this qualification.

The estimates for Guided Learning Hours and Total Qualification Time above have been produced with due regard to information gathered from those with experience in education and training and is in line with guidance published by Ofqual on the allocation and expression of Total Qualification Time and Guided Learning Hours.

Level

The qualification within this specification is designated at Level 2 on the Regulated Qualification Framework (RQF) according to the Level Descriptors for knowledge and understanding, which build on those used within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). This means that this qualification is considered by GA to lead to the outcome as follows:

Achievement at Level 2 reflects the ability to select and use relevant knowledge, ideas, skills and procedures to complete well-defined tasks and address straightforward problems. It includes taking responsibility for completing tasks and procedures and exercising autonomy and judgement subject to overall direction or guidance.

1.5 Rules of Combination

This qualification consists of 11 mandatory units. There are no optional units.

The mandatory units within the qualification are detailed in Section 1.4 above. Candidates must successfully demonstrate their achievement of all the learning outcomes and assessment criteria within the mandatory units.

The learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the unit are provided in Section 4 below.

There are no further rules of combination.

1.6 Intended Audience, Age and Entry Requirements

This qualification is ideal for learners from a range of backgrounds and with a range of personal and professional aspirations, including those seeking to enter the veterinary care sector as veterinary care assistants, those currently working in veterinary practice who wish to formalise their skills and knowledge, and individuals looking to develop a strong foundation in

small animal care while preparing for career progression or further study in veterinary sciences.

This qualification is intended for learners aged 16 and above.

There are no formal entry requirements for this qualification; however, due to the nature of the qualification content, those undertaking the qualification must have a proficient level of spoken and written English (e.g. GCSE Grade C / Grade 4 or above) or equivalent). It may also be appropriate for learners to be undertaking Level 2 maths and English qualifications alongside studying for this vocational qualification at Level 2.

It is recommended that prior to commencing a programme of study leading to this qualification, candidates receive detailed advice and guidance from the training provider in order to ensure the programme and qualification will meet their needs.

Prior work experience is not required to enrol onto this qualification. However, to successfully complete this qualification, learners must arrange a placement at either a veterinary practice or animal care facility that works with the minimum range of small animal species required in the Unit Specifications, i.e. rabbits, cats and dogs.

1.7 Recognition of Prior Learning and Transfer of Credits

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessing whether a learner's previous experience and achievements meet the standard requirements of a GA Unit or Units prior to the candidate taking the assessment for the qualification, or part of the qualification, they are registered for.

Any prior learning must be relevant to the knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of that qualification, and GA will subsequently amend the requirements which a candidate must have satisfied before they are assessed as eligible to be awarded the qualification.

Where there is evidence that the candidate's knowledge and skills are current, valid and sufficient the use of RPL may be acceptable for recognising achievement of assessment criteria, learning outcome or unit(s). The requirement for RPL in such instances must also include a consideration of the currency of the knowledge gained by the candidate at the time they undertook the prior learning. RPL cannot be guaranteed in instances where industry practice or legislation has significantly changed in the time since the prior learning was undertaken / a previous award was issued.

All RPL decisions and processes are subject to External Quality Assurance (EQA) scrutiny and must be documented in line with GA's quality assurance requirements.

No transfer of credits is permitted.

1.8 Relationship to Other Qualifications & Progression Opportunities

The GA Level 2 Diploma for Veterinary Care Assistants (Small Animals) is an ideal qualification from which a learner might progress onto higher level study, practical occupational training or a career in the veterinary nursing or animal care field, or progression to higher level study to become a Registered Veterinary Nurse.

1.9 Language of Assessment

This qualification is offered in English. Further information concerning the provision of qualification and assessment materials in other languages may be obtained from GA.

1.10 Grading

All learning outcomes and assessment requirements must be met before a learner can be considered having achieved this qualification.

This qualification is not graded on a scale. Learners are assessed as Pass or Fail.

Learners who aren't successful can resubmit work within the registration period.

1.11 Qualification Availability

This qualification is available via GA Approved Centres in the UK and internationally. If you would like further information on offering this qualification, please contact us.

Our contact details appear on our website: www.gatehouseawards.org

Section 2 – Qualification Delivery, Assessment Model and Certification

2.1 Teaching and Learning Requirements

Courses leading to this qualification may consist of e-learning courses or classroom-based courses, or a blended option.

Learners can therefore undertake learning and assessment on a flexible basis.

Candidates must have suitable access to teaching and assessment staff as well as technical support. Specialist staff, high quality learning materials and access to assessment opportunities are essential for all centres.

Further details and guidance on the content of teaching and learning for each unit can be found in the Unit Specifications in Section 4 below.

2.2 Assessment and Quality Assurance Model

This qualification uses a combined assessment approach.

Units 1 and 3-11 are internally assessed and internally moderated by centre staff to clearly demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes and qualification requirements.

Unit 2 is assessed through an externally set and externally assessed examination, delivered via the GA AutoProctor system.

Internal assessment, internal moderation and quality assurance activities are subject to external moderation and quality assurance conducted by GA. Centres are therefore subject to the GA Centre Assessment and Standards Scrutiny (CASS) and General Moderation Policy.

2.3 Registering Candidates, Booking Examinations, Registration Validity Period & Unique Learner Numbers

Registering candidates: to register candidates and book examination sessions, centres must use the Ark, GA's online learner management system. Each approved GA centre is provided with user accounts to allow approved staff access to the system.

Examination bookings: examination sessions must be booked a minimum of 5 working days prior to the proposed examination date.

Detailed information relating to the registration of candidates and exam booking procedures can be found in the document Centre Guide to the Ark, published on the GA website.

Registration validity period: Owing to the Total Qualification Time of this qualification, the validity period of registrations made will be 24 months. Should a candidate not have achieved in the timescale, a new registration is required.

ULNs: Where the Unique Learner Number (ULN) of a candidate is known, this should be provided at the point of registration in order for GA to issue updates to the Learner Record Service.

2.4 ID Requirements

It is the responsibility of the centre to have systems in place to confirm each learner's identity. All Centres are therefore required to ensure that each candidate's formal identification documents are checked and these checks are recorded prior to registration. Candidates must also have their identification document with them when taking a GA externally assessed online examination.

Learners are required to declare that all work submitted for assessment is their own work.

2.5 Record Keeping

Records of learner's details, their work and any records of Reasonable Adjustments, Special Considerations and records containing learners' personal details must be kept by the centre in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 (including GDPR and all relevant privacy regulations) for a minimum of 2 years.

The centre must operate a safe and effective system of care and comply with clinical and information governance requirements, with appropriate policies and procedures in place to maintain confidentiality related to clients, staff and learners.

All records must be easily retrievable and made available to GA or the Regulator upon request.

Portfolios must be retained until the following External Quality Assurance visit to allow them to be sampled. Following external moderation and the award of a qualification by GA, centres may return portfolios to learners.

Records of all internal quality assurance and moderation activity undertaken must be kept and made available to GA upon request.

Section 3 – Centre Requirements: Assessment & Quality Assurance

Course providers offering this GA qualification must ensure that they have the following resources in place.

3.1 Staff

The knowledge and experience of all staff involved in the teaching, assessment and internal quality assurance of this qualification will be considered during the approval and re-approval process and at External Quality Assurance Visits.

The course provider must ensure that they hold up-to-date and detailed information about the staff involved with the delivery and quality assurance of this qualification and must make records available to GA upon request. The information GA expects the course provider to hold for each member of staff includes, as a minimum:

- current up to date CV
- copies of relevant qualification certificates
- relevant and up to date CPD (Continuous Professional Development) records

The course provider must also ensure that they have the management and administrative arrangements in place which are suitable to support the registration of candidates and the qualification delivery.

Requirements for Tutors and Assessors

Teaching staff ('Tutors') include those who deliver teaching and learning content for knowledge and understanding elements and those who are involved in teaching and learning of practical skills.

The primary responsibility of an Assessor is to assess a learner's performance and ensure that the evidence submitted by the learner meets the requirements of the qualification.

All Tutors must:

- hold appropriate qualifications such as a veterinary-related qualification at Level 3 or above, such as a Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing. (Higher level qualifications may include a BSc in Veterinary Nursing, Veterinary Surgeon (MRCVS), or Level 4 or higher qualification in Animal Science/Animal Management with substantial veterinary care experience)

- be knowledgeable about the roles and responsibilities of a Veterinary Care Assistant via previous work experience of working as, for example, a Registered Veterinary Nurse, Centre Manager or Kennels Supervisor
- hold, or be working towards, a recognised teaching or training qualification, e.g. Level 3 Award in Education and Training or equivalent*

All Assessors must:

- hold appropriate qualifications such as a veterinary-related qualification at Level 3 or above, such as a Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing. (Higher level qualifications may include a BSc in Veterinary Nursing, Veterinary Surgeon (MRCVS), or Level 4 or higher qualification in Animal Science/Animal Management with substantial veterinary care experience)
- be knowledgeable about the roles and responsibilities of a Veterinary Care Assistant via previous work experience of working as, for example, a Registered Veterinary Nurse, Centre Manager or Kennels Supervisor
- hold, or be working towards, a recognised assessor qualification or their recognised equivalent** e.g.,
 - Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment
 - Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement
 - A1 Assess Candidate Performance Using a Range of Methods
 - D32 Assess Candidate Performance and D33 Assess Candidate Using Differing Sources of Evidence.

*In the absence of a regulated teaching qualification, the Tutor must ensure that they are able to demonstrate that they have delivered a minimum of 30 hours of teaching or assessing. They are then required to agree to update their training to an Ofqual-regulated teaching qualification within two years of commencing their role in order to continue to deliver the qualification. Trainee Tutors MUST be mentored by a suitable qualified Tutor.

**Assessors may be working towards a relevant equivalent qualification in assessing under the guidance of a suitably qualified and experienced Assessor and their IQA. Trainee Assessors' decisions MUST be counter-signed by a suitably qualified, experienced Assessor.

All staff involved with the delivery and assessment of this qualification must also be able to demonstrate ongoing professional development (CPD) relevant to the sector subject area.

Further information about supporting staff members working towards the required qualifications, including requirements for mentoring, counter-signatories and record-keeping, along with expectations for participation in centre-led standardisation activities and instructions for increased sampling and internal moderation activities are also detailed in the Centre Handbook.

Requirements for Internal Moderators (also referred to as an Internal Quality Assurers or IQAs)

IQAs are responsible for internal moderation and quality assurance of the qualification to ensure standardisation, reliability, validity and sufficiency of the assessor's assessment decisions.

IQAs therefore need to have a thorough understanding of quality assurance and assessment practices, as well as sufficient technical understanding related to the qualifications that they are internally quality assuring. It is the centre's responsibility to select and appoint IQAs.

Assessors may have one or several appointed Internal Moderators.

This qualification is assessed by an Assessor and internally moderated and quality assured by an Internal Moderator to ensure standardisation, reliability, validity and sufficiency of the Assessor's assessment decisions.

To be able to perform the internal moderation and quality assurance role, an Internal Moderator must:

- hold appropriate qualifications such as a veterinary-related qualification at Level 3 or above, such as a Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing. (Higher level qualifications may include a BSc in Veterinary Nursing, Veterinary Surgeon (MRCVS), or Level 4 or higher qualification in Animal Science/Animal Management with substantial veterinary care experience)
- be knowledgeable about the roles and responsibilities of a Veterinary Care Assistant via previous work experience of working as, for example, a Registered Veterinary Nurse, Centre Manager or Kennels Supervisor

AND

- hold, or be working towards**, one of the following internal quality assurance qualifications or their recognised equivalent:
 - Level 4 Award in Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice
 - Level 4 Certificate in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice
 - V1 Conduct internal quality assurance of the assessment process
 - D34 Internally verify the assessment process

****Internal Moderators may be working towards a relevant equivalent quality assurance qualification under the guidance of a suitably qualified and experienced Internal Moderator. Trainee Internal Moderator's decisions MUST be counter-signed by a suitably qualified, experienced Internal Moderator.**

Staff may undertake more than one role within the centre, e.g., Tutor, Assessor and Internal Moderator. However, members of staff must NOT IQA their own assessment decisions.

All staff (Tutors, Assessors and IQAs) must maintain a log of their Continuing Professional Development.

It is important to note that the external examination component (Unit 2) is assessed by GA. Centre staff in the role of Invigilator should therefore NOT refer to themselves as examiners, markers or assessors of this unit.

The knowledge and experience of Tutors, Assessors, Internal Moderators and Invigilators will be considered during the centre and qualification approval process and at External Quality Assurance Visits.

Requirements for Expert Witnesses

Workplace practitioners may be used as Expert Witnesses. An Expert Witness can be used for direct observation of the learner's practical skills where the learner is working as a Veterinary Care Assistant in their own workplace or as part of their work placement during the delivery of Component 2 – Practical Skills Assessment (detailed in Section 3.3 below).

Expert Witnesses must have occupational expertise. The use of expert witnesses should be determined and agreed by the centre.

An Expert Witness must:

- have a working knowledge of the qualification units on which their expertise is based
- be occupationally competent in their area of expertise
- have EITHER a qualification in assessment of workplace performance OR a professional work role which involves evaluating the everyday practice of staff.

The workplace supervisor does not have to meet the requirements set out for Teachers or Assessors above (where the Expert Witness is a work-based practitioner). However, it is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the practitioner is suitably qualified and experienced, meets the requirements stipulated above, and is able to take direct responsibility for the management of any complications or issues which may arise.

3.2 Assessment Strategy

Units 1, and 3-11: candidates are assessed on the evidence contained within their portfolio via internal assessment, which is subject to internal moderation (IQA).

Unit 2: candidates are assessed via an externally set and externally assessed examination, provided by GA and delivered via the GA AutoProctor system.

In this qualification, there are four components to assessment:

Component 1 - Theory Assessment

- Covers Units 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10
- Assessment of all criteria is through portfolio evidence

Component 2 - External Examination

- Covers Unit 2
- Online multiple-choice examination
- Externally set and externally assessed
- 60 questions
- 90-minute duration
- Delivered directly to learners via the GA AutoProctor system

Component 3 – Practical Skills Assessment

- Covers Unit 11
- Minimum 35 hours of practical skills completed in an animal care environment, under appropriate supervision
- Documented via a Practical Skills Log
- Provides evidence of skills and competence

Component 4 - Summative Assessment

- Covers Unit 11
- Practical skills assessment
- Consists of a final practical assessment of skills and competence

Further details of the examination and the summative assessment are contained below.

The table below indicates the methods of assessment for each of the units within the GA Level 2 Diploma for Veterinary Care Assistants (Small Animals).

Unit Number and Title	Assessment Criteria	Assessment Method
1. Introduction to Veterinary Nursing and Animal Care	ALL	Portfolio – Component 1
2. Anatomy and Physiology for Veterinary Care Assistants	ALL	External Examination – Component 2
3. Small Animal Nutrition and Husbandry	ALL	Portfolio – Component 1
4. Common Small Animal Diseases and Conditions	ALL	Portfolio – Component 1
5. First Aid for Small Animals	ALL	Portfolio – Component 1
6. Surgical Assistance and Anaesthesia	ALL	Portfolio – Component 1
7. Diagnostic Procedures and Medical Imaging	ALL	Portfolio – Component 1
8. Client Communication and Record Keeping	ALL	Portfolio – Component 1
9. Professional Development and Career Pathways	ALL	Portfolio – Component 1
10. Small Animal Handling and Restraint Techniques	ALL	Portfolio – Component 1
11. Practical Veterinary Nursing and Care Assistance	ALL	Portfolio – Components 3 & 4

3.3 Assessment of Learners

Component 1 – Portfolio Requirements

Learners are expected to build a portfolio of evidence, clearly demonstrating where they have met the learning outcomes and qualification requirements.

Various types of evidence may be used, for example:

- essays/assignments
- short questions and answers

- professional discussions
- observations of performance in the workplace
- workbooks
- product evidence
- reflective accounts
- witness testimony
- records of questioning

Evidence in the portfolio should be mapped against the learning outcomes, reflect the type of evidence supplied and indicate its location within the portfolio. The use of portfolio reference numbers will enable the learner, assessor, IQA and EQA to quickly locate the evidence submitted.

Component 2 – External Examination

This external assessment component is externally assessed via examination materials determined, issued and externally assessed and moderated by GA.

All examinations are conducted under controlled examination conditions.

Examinations are conducted via GA's remote invigilation solution, AutoProctor.

All assessment decisions within this component are made by GA. Centre staff should therefore NOT represent themselves as assessors of the examination.

The structure of the examination is as follows:

Examination Duration	90 minutes
Number of Questions	60
Question Types	Multiple-choice (ABCD)
Pass Mark	70%

About AutoProctor

Also referred to as remote invigilation, GA's AutoProctor system allows a learner to be observed via audio and visual links when completing their online/onscreen external assessment remotely, without the need for centre staff to invigilate the examination in person.

GA's AutoProctor system contains all necessary examination security and monitoring functionality built-in. It requires the candidate to have:

- a main device (computer/laptop) for taking the examination
- an auxiliary device (e.g., smartphone) for room scanning and monitoring
- a stable internet connection
- a suitable examination environment that is quiet and well-lit

AutoProctor will complete environment checks and identity verification before the start of the exam.

Candidates must follow GA's remote proctoring procedures, including:

- room scanning
- identity verification
- screen sharing between the main and auxiliary devices
- continuous video monitoring throughout the examination

To support centres and learners preparing for a GA AutoProctor examination, Gatehouse Awards provides the document GA Auto-Proctored Exams - Candidate Guide, available to approved GA centres and via the GA website.

Learners are encouraged to take a short practice exam with AutoProctor. This will help learners become familiar with how the system works and make sure that all their devices meet the exam requirements.

A practice exam using AutoProctor can be accessed here:

<https://exams.gatehouseawards.org/proctor-example-setup/>

Component 3 – Practical Skills Assessment

Learners must demonstrate the completion of at least 35 hours of practical experience before being awarded this qualification. GA provides a Practical Skills Log document to approved centres for this purpose.

Learners must be employed in, or be undertaking a work placement within, a clinical setting. Where placements are used, it is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that the placement offers a safe environment for the learner and provides a sufficient case load and has access to the required species in order to meet the requirements of the qualification.

Where a work placement is used, the centre must maintain regular contact with both the learner and the nominated workplace supervisor throughout to monitor the learner's progress.

The species from the range must be covered for each criteria - Cat, Dog, Rabbit. It is paramount that the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 is adhered to for all practical training and assessment, along with VCAs only working under direct supervision and within their limitations. Learners must be able to document at least 35 hours of practical work which demonstrates their skills and competencies.

As part of the Practical Assessment, every learner must complete the following in line with the assessment strategy for Unit 11: all practical assessment activities must reflect real scenarios and enable learners to demonstrate practical skills on live animals. The welfare of animals, whether actual patients or an animal acting as one for the purpose of assessment, must be prioritised at all times.

Requirements for Supervision

The centre must ensure that a suitably qualified and experienced staff member supervises the learner's clinical practice. This may be the learner's teacher or assessor, or be a nominated work-based practitioner who is suitably qualified and experienced to undertake this supervisory role and acting in the capacity of an Expert Witness.

All evidence must meet CRAVES requirements.

3.4 CRAVES Requirements

Assessors must ensure that all evidence within the learner's portfolio judged to meet GA's 'CRAVES' requirements is:

- **current:** the work is relevant at the time of the assessment
- **reliable:** the work is consistent with that produced by other learners
- **authentic:** the work is the candidate's own work
- **valid:** the work is relevant and appropriate to the subject being assessed and is at the required level
- **evaluated:** where the learner has not been assessed as competent, the deficiencies have been clearly and accurately identified via feedback to the learner
- **sufficient:** the work covers the expected learning outcomes and any range statements as specified in the criteria or requirements in the assessment strategy.

3.5 Internal Moderation and Quality Assurance Arrangements

Internal Moderators (also known as Internal Quality Assurers or IQAs) ensure that Assessors are assessing to the same standards, i.e. consistently and reliably, and that assessment decisions are correct. IQA activities will include:

- ensuring Assessors are suitably experienced and qualified in line with the qualification requirements
- sampling assessments and assessment decisions
- ensuring that assessment decisions meet the GA 'CRAVES' requirements (Current, Reliable, Authentic, Valid, Evaluated and Sufficient)
- conducting standardisation and moderation of assessment decisions
- providing Assessors with clear and constructive feedback
- supporting Assessors and providing training and development where appropriate
- ensuring any stimulus or materials used for the purposes of assessment are fit for purpose.

Sampling of assessment will be planned and carried out in line with a clear IQA and moderation strategy, which incorporates the number of learners, number of Assessors, and the experience and competency of Assessors.

Centre IQAs may wish to refer to the guidance documents provided by GA to approved centres (available on the Ark) in order to formulate an appropriate Sampling Strategy.

3.6 External Moderation and Quality Assurance Arrangements

All GA Approved Centres are entitled to two EQA visits per year. Additional visits can be requested, for which there may be an additional charge.

Assessment and internal moderation and quality assurance activities are subject to external moderation and wider scrutiny and centre controls as per GA's quality assurance arrangements for centre-assessed qualifications

EQA activities will also focus on the centre's continuing adherence to and maintenance of the *GA Centre Approval Criteria* and the criteria and requirements for the specific qualifications for which it holds approval. These include:

- checking that the management of the centre and the management arrangements relating to the qualification are sufficient

- checking that resources to support the delivery of the qualifications, including physical resources and staffing, are in place and sufficient
- ensuring that the centre has appropriate policies and procedures in place relevant to the organisation and to the delivery and quality assurance of the qualifications
- the use of assessment materials and the arrangements in place to ensure that evidence for assessment is 'CRAVES' (Current, Reliable, Authentic, Valid, Evaluated and Sufficient)
- sampling assessment decisions against the qualification requirements across the range of levels, number of Assessors and assessment sites, according to the number of candidates
- the internal moderation and quality assurance arrangements
- sampling internal moderation records against the qualification requirements across the range of levels, number of Assessors and assessment sites, according to the number of candidates
- administrative arrangements
- ensuring that any actions from moderation and wider quality assurance activity have been carried out by the centre
- confirming any claims for RPL, reasonable adjustments or special considerations

Through discussions with centre staff, examining learner's work, moderation of assessment, talking to learners and reviewing documentation and systems, the GA EQA will provide the centre with full support, advice and guidance as necessary.

3.7 Venue and Equipment Requirements

When training premises are used in the delivery of teaching and assessment of this qualification, centres should, wherever possible, provide suitable access in line with Disability Discrimination, Diversity & Equality law and regulations and any other regulations which apply.

Centres must ensure that all products and equipment used in the delivery and assessment of this qualification must be authorised by GA and confirmed as fit for purpose and compliant with current Health and Safety legislation and any other relevant regulations. This will be considered at approval and during the on-going monitoring of centres.

Where specific products and equipment are required for the delivery and assessment of a GA qualification, the suitability of the products and equipment at the centre will be considered during the centre and qualification approval process and at External Quality Assurance Visits

Work placements can be either veterinary practice specific (but do not need to be an RCVS Registered Training Practice) or animal care specific, but must have the equipment specified below and access to the required species for training and assessment, along with the

appropriately experienced and qualified Supervisors. Attention must be paid to safety and correct supervision of learners at all times.

Centres and workplace settings must ensure that all equipment been tested for safety and is in good working order for learners to use.

The minimum requirements are:

- A range of welfare focused restraint and handling equipment
- A range of enrichment equipment, or facilities to make their own
- Routine equipment for parasite prevention, grooming equipment, nail clippers
- Health record templates
- Feeding equipment
- Watering equipment
- Feeding and watering record templates
- Cleaning and sanitising equipment
- COSHH storage
- Medication storage in line with legislation
- Facilities for recycling and sustainable waste disposal
- Exercise provision/ areas
- Exercise record templates
- Personal Protective Equipment

Full details of the equipment requirements for using the GA AutoProctor system can be found in the document Technology Requirements for Gatehouse Awards Online Examinations.

3.8 Teaching and Learning Resources

GA does not prescribe the use of set course books, workbooks or other materials but expects that centres providing such courses should use relevant and up-to-date, high-quality teaching and learning materials which allow candidates to adequately prepare for assessment.

All delivery and assessment resources should be inclusive of the principles of equality and diversity and the safeguarding of candidates.

Please note, any references to books, journals, websites or other third party materials and publications made by GA does not infer that GA's accepts responsibility for the content of such materials or any opinions expressed within them.

3.9 Results

For a qualification which includes the use of an externally marked online examination, the examination is marked and moderated by GA staff. Results are available for authorised centre staff to view on the Ark.

Standard examination results are issued within 10 working days of the receipt of a full and correct submission of all examination materials.

If a learner has failed the examination, a Notification of Results will be issued informing the candidate that they have not achieved.

Centres may make claims for certification via the Ark when learners complete and the Assessor and Internal Moderator have confirmed achievement of all qualification components. Such claims for certification are subject to successful external moderation.

For results enquiries, centres are asked to contact their named Centre Administrator. Such enquiries should only be submitted in instances where the timescales for issuing results and certificates as outlined above have been exceeded.

Following the External Moderator's confirmation of a learner's achievement of all components of the qualification, GA will authorise claims for the certification of learners, details of which will be visible to the centre in the centre's Ark account. Certificates are usually issued within 10 working days of the award of the qualification.

3.10 Examination Re-sits

A candidate who is assessed as not having passed the external examination component should be advised to wait until they have progressed to a sufficient degree before they re-sit the examination(s).

Re-sit examinations should be booked via the Ark.

Candidates who re-sit the examinations will be provided with different examination materials to those used previously.

A maximum of two re-sit attempts are permitted. Each re-sit attempt will require an additional examination session booking and will be chargeable.

Should a learner have not passed the examination after their third attempt, no further attempts can be made. A new registration is required and a minimum of 6 months must have passed prior to booking the examination session again under the new registration. This period allows learners sufficient time to undertake additional study and preparation before attempting the examination again. Centres must provide appropriate guidance and support to learners during this period to help them address areas of weakness identified in previous attempts.

3.11 Certificates

The qualification certificate will indicate both the title and the level at which the qualification is achieved.

Certificates will only be issued to learners who have achieved sufficient credits and met the rules of combination for the qualification they are registered for. If a learner has not achieved sufficient credits or failed to meet the rules of combination, the qualification certificate will not be issued.

Replacement certificates are available upon request.

Amendments to certificates are available upon request but may require the centre to provide evidence of the need for any amendment (e.g. learner proof of identification) and will involve the return of the original certificate. Replacements and amendments may incur an additional charge.

3.12 Direct Claims Status (DCS)

Direct Claims Status is not available for this qualification.

3.13 Appeals and Enquiries

GA has an appeals procedure in accordance with the arrangements for regulated qualifications.

General enquiries can be made at any time and should be directed to a GA Centre Administrator.

3.15 Ongoing Support

There are a number of documents on the GA website that centres and candidates may find useful: www.gatehouseawards.org

The website is updated regularly with news, information about all GA qualifications, sample materials, updates on regulations and other important notices.

Within the centre, a named Examinations Officer is responsible for ensuring that all information and documents provided to centre staff and candidates are correct and up to date.

GA must be kept up to date with contact details of all changes of personnel so centres can be provided with the best level of support and guidance.

At the time of approval, centres are assigned a designated Centre Administrator who is their primary point of contact for all aspects of service or support.

Learners should always speak to a member of staff at the centre for information relating to GA and our qualifications prior to approaching GA directly.

Contact details for GA can be found on the GA website www.gatehouseawards.org.

Section 4: Unit Specifications

4.1 GA Level 2 Diploma for Veterinary Care Assistants (Small Animals) (610/5352/1)

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Unit Reference
1	Introduction to Veterinary Nursing and Animal Care	30	5	Y/651/4957
<p>In this unit, the learner will explore aspects of working as a Veterinary Care Assistant (VCA) in a veterinary practice setting. The learner will develop their knowledge and understanding of different types of veterinary practices, team roles, and the key skills required to be an effective VCA. They will also develop their understanding of the ethical and legal framework governing veterinary practice, including medicines regulations and Schedule 3 requirements.</p> <p>The learner will enhance their knowledge of animal behaviour and welfare, focusing on the Five Welfare Needs and safe handling of small animals. Additionally, they will develop their understanding of health and safety regulations specific to the veterinary environment. This unit also prepares learners for the VCA role by providing essential knowledge of professional, legal, and the practical aspects of veterinary care.</p>				
Assessment Instructions, Guidance & Indicative Content				
<p>Assessment Requirements</p> <p>The learner must cover three different animals in each Assessment Criteria within Learning Outcome 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cat • Dog • Rabbit <p>Additional Assessment Guidance and Indicative Content is available to GA approved centres.</p>				

Learning Outcomes The learner will be able to	Assessment Criteria The learner can
1. Understand terminology used in veterinary practice	1.1 Define key terminology used by a Veterinary Care Assistant in veterinary practice
	1.2 Explain the importance of using correct terminology in veterinary practice
2. Understand veterinary practice structures and team roles	2.1. Describe different types of veterinary practices and their key characteristics
	2.2. Explain the roles and responsibilities of different veterinary team members
3. Know how to be an effective Veterinary Care and Support Assistant	3.1 Explain the skills and qualities required to be a Veterinary Care and Support Assistant
	3.2 Summarise the importance of teamwork and communication in the role of a Veterinary Care and Support Assistant
4. Understand ethical, legal and regulatory considerations in veterinary practice	4.1 Define the term 'duty of care'
	4.2 Explain the functions of key veterinary industry professional bodies
	4.3 Describe the legislation that applies to veterinary practice
	4.4 Define the term 'Schedule 3' in relation to veterinary practice
	4.5 Explain the implications of failing to adhere to ethical and legal standards in veterinary practice
5. Know the categories and regulations for veterinary medicines	5.1 List the different classifications of veterinary medicines
	5.2 State who can legally prescribe the classifications of veterinary medicines

	5.3 Describe procedures for handling, storing, and recording veterinary medicines according to legal requirements
6. Know the basic principles of animal behaviour, welfare and handling	6.1 Define the Five Welfare Needs as they apply to small animals
	6.2 Describe safe and humane handling techniques for small animals
	6.3 Describe species-specific 'normal' and 'abnormal' body language and behaviour in small animals
	6.4 Explain the importance of understanding animal behaviour when handling small animals
7. Understand health and safety in the veterinary setting	7.1 Identify key health and safety regulations relevant to the veterinary environment
	7.2 Describe procedures for managing common hazards in veterinary practice, including biological, chemical, and physical risks
	7.3 Explain the role of risk assessments in maintaining health and safety in the veterinary setting

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Unit Reference
2	Anatomy and Physiology for Veterinary Care Assistants	50	6	A/651/4958
<p>In this unit, learners will develop their knowledge and understanding of animal anatomy and physiology. Learners will develop their knowledge of cellular biology and the structure and function of cells in the animal body, and use the key terminology used in animal anatomy and physiology, crucial for accurate communication in veterinary and animal care settings.</p> <p>The unit develops the learner's understanding of each of the major body systems including respiratory, circulatory, reproductive, digestive, musculoskeletal, excretory, endocrine, and nervous systems. For each system, learners will gain knowledge of the key components and their functions, as well as understanding how these systems work together to maintain animal health. Learners will also understand body cavities and how they are organised within the animal body. Where relevant, learners will also explore variations between species.</p> <p>This knowledge of animal anatomy and physiology will enable learners to better understand animal health, recognise normal functions, and appreciate how body systems interact.</p>				
Assessment Instructions & Guidance				
<p>This unit is assessed through a secure, controlled examination that is externally set and externally marked by GA.</p> <p>The examination consists of 60 multiple-choice questions (ABCD) to be completed in 90 minutes.</p> <p>The pass mark is 70%.</p> <p>The examination is delivered remotely GA's AutoProctor examination system.</p> <p>Booking and scheduling examinations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinations must be booked during routine working hours (i.e. Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). <p>The examination content covers anatomy and physiology relating to small animals, with a focus on the anatomy and physiology of cats, dogs, and rabbits.</p>				

Questions will assess knowledge across all learning outcomes as detailed below.

Sample assessment materials are available to support learners to prepare for the examination.

Results are issued by GA following external marking. A maximum of two resit attempts are permitted.

Important notes:

- No teacher-set or teacher-marked tasks in the learner's portfolio can contribute to the final mark.
- All assessment is under strict examination conditions.
- Reasonable adjustments may be applied where approved.
- Technical requirements for online delivery must be met and tested in advance.

Support materials provided include:

- Sample assessment materials
- Technology Requirements for GA Online Examinations
- GA Autoproctored Exams: Candidate Guide

Learning Outcomes The learner will be able to	Areas of Required Knowledge <i>(please refer to the Indicative Content documentation for a full breakdown. This is available to approved centres).</i>	Question allocation
1. Understand the structure and function of animal cells and tissue types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cell structure • Cell functions 	4 questions
2. Understand common anatomical terminology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anatomical terms and definitions • Physiological terms and definitions 	5 questions
3. Know the structure and function of the respiratory system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respiratory system components • Respiratory system functions 	6 questions
4. Know the structure and function of the circulatory and lymphatic system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulatory system components • Circulatory system functions • Lymphatic system components • Lymphatic system functions 	6 questions
5. Know the structure and function of the reproductive systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female reproductive system components • Male reproductive system components • Female reproductive system functions • Male reproductive system functions 	6 questions
6. Know the structure and function of the digestive system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digestive system components • Digestive system functions 	6 questions
7. Know the structure and function of the musculoskeletal system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Musculoskeletal system components • Musculoskeletal system functions 	6 questions
8. Know the structure and function of the excretory system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excretory system components • Excretory system functions 	6 questions

9. Know the structure and function of the nervous system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nervous system components Nervous system functions 	6 questions
10. Know the structure and function of the endocrine system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Endocrine system components Endocrine system functions 	5 questions
11. Know the major body cavities of animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisation of body cavities Function and contents of body cavities 	4 questions

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Unit Reference
3	Small Animal Nutrition and Husbandry	22	3	D/651/4959
<p>In this unit, learners will develop an understanding of animal nutrition, feeding behaviours, and dietary requirements. They will explore the essential nutrients, their roles and the importance of a balanced diet, as well as specific feeding patterns. The learner will develop knowledge of feeding and watering routines, including hygienic food preparation, monitoring feeding plans, and ensuring adequate water intake.</p> <p>Learners will also examine housing, hygiene and environmental enrichment, focusing on housing needs and the importance of good hygiene practices. Finally, learners will explore the care of animals in veterinary practice, including special dietary needs, hygiene protocols, minimising stress, and the provision of exercise and individualised care for in-patients.</p>				
Assessment Instructions, Guidance & Indicative Content				
<p>Assessment Requirements</p> <p>The learner must cover three different animals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cat • Dog • Rabbit <p>Additional Assessment Guidance and Indicative Content is available to GA approved centres.</p>				

Learning Outcomes The learner will be able to	Assessment Criteria The learner can
1. Understand animal nutrition feeding behaviours and dietary requirements	1.1 Describe the essential nutrients small animals require
	1.2 Identify the specific dietary requirements for different life stages and common conditions in small animals
	1.3 Describe the role of each of the nutrient groups
	1.4 Explain the importance of a balanced diet for small animals
	1.5 Describe feeding behaviours and patterns of small animals
2. Know the principles of feeding and watering routines	2.1 Outline appropriate feeding routines for small animals
	2.2 Describe the process for hygienic food preparation
	2.3 Describe the potential health risks of incorrect feeding
	2.4 Explain how to monitor and adjust feeding routines according to individual animal needs and veterinary instructions
	2.5 Explain the importance of water for animal health
	2.6 Describe methods to monitor hydration and encourage fluid intake
	2.7 Explain the importance of appropriate record keeping
	2.8 Explain the importance of reporting changes in animal feeding and watering patterns

3. Understand housing, hygiene, and environmental enrichment	3.1 Describe the basic housing requirements for small animals
	3.2 Identify hygiene practices for maintaining small animal health
	3.3 Explain the link between poor hygiene and ill health for small animals
	3.4 Explain how environmental enrichment promotes small animal well-being
	3.5 Identify appropriate environmental enrichment techniques for small animals
4. Know considerations for the care of animals in veterinary practice	4.1 Identify the special dietary and care needs of in-patients
	4.2 Describe infection control and hygiene protocols for inpatients
	4.3 Explain the methods and significance of minimising stress for inpatients
	4.4 Explain the importance of providing individualised care for inpatients
	4.5 Describe appropriate exercise opportunities for different types of inpatients and their associated health benefits

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Unit Reference
4	Common Small Animal Diseases and Conditions	26	4	J/651/4960
<p>In this unit, learners will develop their understanding of common injuries and diseases affecting small animals, including their transmission and impact on health and well-being. Learners will explore zoonotic and notifiable diseases, and develop knowledge of monitoring inpatients including recognition of clinical signs, conducting health checks, and understanding when to escalate findings.</p> <p>Learners will also develop their understanding of biosecurity measures and infection control, including the definition of biosecurity, key measures and SOPs to prevent disease spread, correct handwashing techniques and PPE, preventative care, and the safe disposal of veterinary waste.</p>				
Assessment Instructions, Guidance & Indicative Content				
<p>Assessment Requirements</p> <p>The learner must cover three different animals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cat • Dog • Rabbit <p>Additional Assessment Guidance and Indicative Content is available to GA approved centres.</p>				

Learning Outcomes The learner will be able to	Assessment Criteria The learner can
1. Understand common injuries and diseases	1.1 Identify common injuries that affect small animals
	1.2 Describe common infectious and non-infectious diseases in small animals
	1.3 Explain methods of disease transmission
	1.4 Explain the impact of injuries and diseases on the health and well-being of small animals
	1.5 Define the term 'Zoonotic and Notifiable' disease
2. Know how to monitor inpatients	2.1 List common signs and symptoms of diseases in small animals
	2.2 Explain the importance of early detection of signs and symptoms in managing small animal health
	2.3 Describe how to conduct and record a systematic health check
	2.4 Outline methods for monitoring and recording vital signs, fluid intake/output, and behaviour of inpatients
	2.5 Describe when and how to report concerning changes in an animal's condition
3. Understand biosecurity measures and infection control	3.1 Define the term 'Biosecurity'
	3.2 Explain the risks of poor biosecurity to animals, staff and clients
	3.3 Outline key biosecurity measures and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to prevent the spread of disease

	3.4 Describe hand hygiene protocols including hand washing and sanitising
	3.5 Explain the importance of appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for infection control
	3.6 Explain the importance of vaccination and preventative care in reducing the risk of disease
	3.7 Describe categories of veterinary waste and their correct disposal methods
	3.8 Explain how and when isolation procedures are required
	3.9 Outline appropriate cleaning and disinfecting methods in a veterinary setting
	3.10 Explain the importance of maintaining accurate record of infection control procedures

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Unit Reference
5	First Aid and Emergency Protocols	16	2	K/651/4961
<p>In this unit, the learner will develop their understanding of how to respond to emergency situations in veterinary practice, including triage procedures and emergency protocols within their scope of practice. The learner will develop their knowledge of basic first aid techniques, including monitoring vital signs and using emergency equipment.</p> <p>The learner will also explore methods for stabilising and safely transporting animals requiring emergency treatment, and develop their understanding of the legal considerations and limitations when providing first aid care to small animals.</p>				
Assessment Instructions, Guidance & Indicative Content				
<p>Assessment Requirements</p> <p>The learner must cover three different animals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cat • Dog • Rabbit <p>Additional Assessment Guidance and Indicative Content is available to GA approved centres.</p>				

Learning Outcomes The learner will be able to	Assessment Criteria The learner can
1. Know how to respond to common emergencies	1.1 Identify common emergencies in small animals
	1.2 Describe how to triage within own limitations
	1.3 Describe the protocols to follow when responding to an emergency
	1.4 Explain the importance of remaining calm during an emergency
2. Understand first aid techniques	2.1 Describe how to assess and monitor vital signs
	2.2 Describe first aid techniques for common emergency situations
	2.3 Explain when and how to use common first aid equipment
	2.4 Describe how to maintain and check first aid kits
3. Know how to stabilise and safely transport small animals in emergencies	3.1 Describe how to stabilise small animals before transporting them
	3.2 Identify appropriate equipment and techniques for safe emergency transport
	3.3 Explain the information to be communicated when reporting an incoming emergency
	3.4 Describe how to prepare the practice for receiving emergency cases
4. Understand the legal considerations of	4.1 Identify the legal responsibilities of providing first aid to small animals in the UK

administering first aid to small animals	4.2 Describe the importance and process of obtaining consent when administering first aid to animals that are not your own
	4.3 Explain the scope of practice for a VCA and legal implications of exceeding this
	4.4 Describe the potential consequences of improper first aid practices on animal welfare

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Unit Reference
6	Supporting Surgical Procedures	32	4	L/651/4962
<p>In this unit, the learner will develop their understanding of supporting surgical procedures within the scope of a Veterinary Care and Support Assistant role. They will explore pre-operative procedures, including preparation of equipment and maintaining sterile environments.</p> <p>The learner will also develop knowledge of sterilisation principles and surgical equipment handling, and gain understanding of basic anaesthesia monitoring. Additionally, they will explore the euthanasia process and develop skills in supporting both the clinical team and clients through this sensitive journey.</p>				
Assessment Instructions, Guidance & Indicative Content				
<p>Assessment Requirements</p> <p>The learner must cover three different animals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cat • Dog • Rabbit <p>Additional Assessment Guidance and Indicative Content is available to GA approved centres.</p>				

Learning Outcomes The learner will be able to	Assessment Criteria The learner can
1. Understand pre-operative surgical procedures as a Veterinary Care Assistant	1.1 Describe the VCA role and responsibilities in preparing patients for surgery
	1.2 Identify the equipment and materials needed for common surgical procedures
	1.3 Explain the importance of maintaining a sterile environment during surgery
	1.4 Describe the scope and limitations of the VCA in surgical support
	1.5 Describe procedures for surgical area preparation and maintenance
2. Know the principles of sterilisation and surgical equipment handling	2.1 Outline the procedures for sterilising surgical instruments and equipment
	2.2 Describe the handling and storage of sterilised surgical instruments
	2.3 Describe how to identify, manage and report potential breaches in sterility
	2.4 Explain how to maintain surgical equipment
	2.5 Describe documentation requirements for sterilisation procedures
3. Understand the basics of anaesthesia and monitoring techniques	3.1 Identify different types of anaesthesia and their purpose
	3.2 Describe monitoring techniques used during the use of anaesthesia
4. Understand the euthanasia journey	4.1 Explain euthanasia in small animals

	4.2 Describe common reasons for euthanasia in small animals
	4.3 Describe how to support the clinical team before, during and after euthanasia
	4.4 Describe how to support bereaved clients
	4.5 Describe procedures for handling deceased patients with dignity

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Unit Reference
7	Diagnostic Procedures and Medical Imaging	20	3	M/651/4963
<p>In this unit, the learner will develop their understanding of the diagnostic procedures in veterinary practice, including the use and maintenance of diagnostic equipment.</p> <p>They will also explore diagnostic imaging techniques, associated health and safety risks, and strategies for minimising those risks. The learner will also develop their knowledge and understanding of sample collection and laboratory procedures, including correct handling, storage and transportation of biological samples, within their scope of practice.</p>				
Assessment Instructions, Guidance and Indicative Content				
<p>Assessment Requirements</p> <p>The learner must cover three different animals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cat • Dog • Rabbit <p>Additional Assessment Guidance and Indicative Content is available to GA approved centres.</p>				

Learning Outcomes The learner will be able to	Assessment Criteria The learner can
1. Know the purpose and use of diagnostic equipment	1.1 Identify common diagnostic equipment used in veterinary practice
	1.2 Describe the purpose of diagnostic equipment
	1.3 Explain the importance of maintaining and calibrating diagnostic equipment
	1.4 Describe procedures for reporting equipment faults or malfunctions
2. Understand diagnostic imaging and safety implications	2.1 Describe different types of diagnostic imaging and their common uses
	2.2 Explain the health and safety risks associated with diagnostic imaging
	2.3 Describe how to minimise risks associated with diagnostic imaging
3. Know sample collection and laboratory procedures	3.1 Outline procedures for collecting samples from small animals
	3.2 Describe handling, labelling, recording and storage of collected samples
	3.3 Identify legal restrictions and guidelines for handling biological samples

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Unit Reference
8	Client Communication and Record Keeping	20	3	R/651/4964
<p>In this unit, learners will develop essential skills in client communication and record keeping within a veterinary practice setting. They will explore effective communication methods with clients and colleagues, including managing challenging situations and delivering information with clarity and compassion.</p> <p>The learner will also develop their knowledge and understanding of proper documentation procedures and the maintenance of accurate patient records. Learners will gain understanding of how to support pet owners through various situations, from routine care to more sensitive circumstances. Additionally, they will learn about GDPR requirements and their practical application in protecting client and patient information within a veterinary environment.</p>				
Assessment Instructions, Guidance and Indicative Content				
<p>Assessment Requirements</p> <p>The learner must cover three different animals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cat • Dog • Rabbit <p>Additional Assessment Guidance and Indicative Content is available to GA approved centres.</p>				

Learning Outcomes The learner will be able to	Assessment Criteria The learner can
1. Understand effective communication with clients and colleagues	1.1 Describe the importance of effective communication
	1.2 Explain the different methods of communication
	1.3 Describe how to manage challenging communication
	1.4 Explain the importance of clear, concise and compassionate communication
	1.5 Explain the importance of being aware of cultural considerations during communication
2. Understand the significance of maintaining accurate records	2.1 Describe the types of records kept
	2.2 Describe the procedures for recording and updating patient information
3. Understand how to support pet owners	3.1 Identify queries that pet owners may have and appropriate responses
	3.2 Describe methods for informing pet owners about pet care and health
	3.3 Explain how to offer support to pet owners
4. Understand data protection and privacy regulations	4.1 Identify key principles of data protection and privacy regulations
	4.2 Describe the procedures for handling and safeguarding client and patient information
	4.3 Explain the consequences of failing to comply with data protection and privacy regulations

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Unit Reference
9	Professional Development and Career Pathways	10	2	T/651/4965
<p>In this unit, the learner will develop their knowledge and understanding of various career pathway opportunities and the key factors to consider when choosing a suitable career path. The learners will gain insight into Continuous Professional Development (CPD), including its significance in career growth and the different methods available for engaging in CPD activities.</p> <p>Additionally, the learner will explore the important role of personal development planning and creating their own personalised development plans, helping them set clear goals and strategies for ongoing professional advancement.</p>				
Assessment Instructions, Guidance and Indicative Content				
<p>There are no specific assessment instructions for this unit.</p> <p>Additional Assessment Guidance and Indicative Content is available to GA approved centres.</p>				

Learning Outcomes The learner will be able to	Assessment Criteria The learner can
1. Know career pathways within the veterinary sector	1.1 Describe career pathway opportunities
	1.2 Explain the factors to consider when choosing a career pathway
	1.3 State the training and education routes for a chosen career pathway
2. Understand the importance of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	2.1 Define 'CPD'
	2.2 Identify methods of undertaking CPD
	2.3 Explain the purpose of a personal development plan

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Unit Reference
10	Principles of Small Animal Handling and Restraint	17	3	Y/651/4966
<p>In this unit, learners will gain knowledge of safe and effective methods for handling and restraining small animals, identifying appropriate techniques and equipment for routine procedures while understanding their importance in ensuring safety and minimising stress. The learner will explore ways to recognise signs of stress and anxiety in small animals during handling and restraint, describing methods to reduce these responses and highlighting the benefits for animal well-being.</p> <p>Learners will also understand specific restraint techniques required for administering medications and treatments, ensuring procedures are carried out effectively and in line with best practices and practice protocols.</p>				
Assessment Instructions, Guidance and Indicative Content				
<p>Assessment Requirements</p> <p>The learner must cover three different animals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cat • Dog • Rabbit <p>Additional Assessment Guidance and Indicative Content is available to GA approved centres.</p>				

Learning Outcomes The learner will be able to	Assessment Criteria The learner can
1. Know safe and effective methods for handling and restraint	1.1 Describe the importance of completing a risk assessment prior to handling
	1.2 Identify appropriate handling and restraint techniques
	1.3 Describe how to restrain small animals for routine procedures
	1.4 Explain the importance of appropriate restraint methods and equipment
2. Know how to minimise stress and anxiety in small animals	2.1 List signs of stress and anxiety during handling and restraint
	2.2 Describe methods of reducing stress and anxiety during handling and restraint
	2.3 Describe the advantages of reducing stress for the well-being of small animals
3. Understand techniques for handling while administering medications and treatments	3.1 Describe restraint techniques for assisting with oral medications for small animals
	3.2 Describe restraint techniques for assisting with topical treatments for small animals
	3.3 Describe restraint techniques for assisting with different types of injections for small animals

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Unit Reference
11	Practical Veterinary Care and Support	60	7	A/651/4967
<p>In this unit, the learner will develop comprehensive skills in animal care, including conducting routine health checks by accurately monitoring and recording vital signs, assessing physical conditions, recognising signs of illness, and administering treatments safely under supervision. Learners will explore how to provide appropriate diets by considering species-specific needs and monitoring intake, reporting any concerns to the clinical team. They will learn effective handling and restraint techniques to ensure safety for both animals and handlers, with adaptations based on the animal's behavior and history.</p> <p>Learners will adhere to hygiene and safety protocols, ensuring clean environments and proper waste disposal in compliance with health regulations, emphasising sustainable practices. Additionally, learners will assess exercise and enrichment needs for various animals, incorporating activities that promote physical and mental well-being, while monitoring and recording outcomes to support overall health and prevent behavioral issues.</p>				
Assessment Instruction, Guidance and Indicative Content				
<p>Assessment Requirements</p> <p>The learner must cover three different animals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cat • Dog • Rabbit <p>Additional Assessment Guidance and Indicative Content is available to GA approved centres.</p>				

Learning Outcomes The learner will be able to	Assessment Criteria The learner can
1. Be able to perform veterinary care and support tasks	1.1 Demonstrate how to carry out routine health checks
	1.2 Demonstrate how to administer medications
	1.3 Demonstrate grooming for welfare
	1.4 Demonstrate monitoring and recording of small animals post operatively
2. Be able to provide food and water to small animals	2.1 Select, prepare and provide appropriate diet and water
	2.2 Monitor and record feed and water intake
	2.3 Report outcomes of feeding and watering to the clinical team
3. Be able to apply effective handling and restraint techniques for small animals	3.1 Demonstrate handling and restraint techniques
	3.2 Adapt restraint methods based on the animal's behaviour, history and size
4. Be able to maintain hygiene and safety standards in veterinary practice	4.1 Demonstrate appropriate hygienic practices
	4.2 Demonstrate adherence to practice protocols for cleaning and sanitising
	4.3 Demonstrate adherence to Health and Safety protocols when handling chemicals and medications
	4.4 Demonstrate disposal methods for waste materials

	4.5 Demonstrate sustainable practices
5. Be able to provide appropriate exercise and enrichment opportunities	5.1 Demonstrate assessment of exercise needs
	5.2 Provide safe and appropriate exercise opportunities
	5.3 Provide appropriate enrichment for well-being
	5.4 Monitor and record the outcomes following exercise and enrichment

Appendix 1: Internal Moderation and Quality Assurance Regulations and Guidance

1.1 Introduction to Internal Moderation

Internal Moderation is a centre's internal system that ensures learner evidence is complete and genuinely meets all the required criteria by which the learner is judged to have met in order to be awarded a qualification. The process involves regularly sampling and evaluating the centre's assessment practices and decisions, and it is the Internal Moderator's responsibility to act on their findings to ensure consistency and fairness.

Ensuring quality standards are maintained and are consistent within and across a centre's provision is the responsibility of the head of centre, who must ensure that suitable staff are in place to act as Internal Moderator(s) and provide full support and standards scrutiny of the centre's Assessment decisions.

1.2 Internal Moderation Processes

Internal Moderation involves three key processes: co-ordination of the assessment process, standardisation of assessment practice, and sampling of assessed work.

These processes are conducted by one Internal Moderator or, if there is more than one, a team of Internal Moderators who are under the direction of a Lead Internal Moderator.

Information about the experience and qualification requirements for Internal Moderators is provided in the *Qualification Specification*.

1.3. Co-ordination of the Assessment Process

Prior to delivery commencing, it is the Internal Moderator who will confirm that assessment tasks are appropriate. This may involve checking that proposed assessment activities, plans for practical assessments, or the briefs of any assignments or reports are fit for purpose. It may also include checking that internal tests or examination materials are fit for purpose.

In order to ensure that the planned assessment activities and materials are fit for purpose, the Internal Moderator will consider and judge whether the activities and materials provide inclusive opportunities for all learners to meet the assessment objectives and generate evidence which is current, reliable, authentic, valid, able to be evaluated and sufficient to meet the requirements of the qualification.

During delivery of assessment, Internal Moderators will work with the Assessment team, ensuring that assessment practices are being carried out correctly. This may involve observing assessment taking place.

1.4 Standardisation of Assessment

The standardisation process helps to ensure that all centre staff involved in the delivery, assessment and quality assurance are consistent and fair to all learners and interpret and follow the requirements of the qualification in the same way.

Internal Moderators are expected to ensure high levels of consistency across Assessors and centre delivery sites through sharing good practice and providing feedback and support, doing so accurately and in good time. The internal Moderator may highlight areas for further CPD or additional training as necessary.

1.5. Sampling Process

When planning and carrying out internal moderation activities, it is important that the Internal Moderator works to a sound sampling strategy to ensure that standardisation of assessment decisions can take place.

A centre's sampling strategy involves reviewing the quality of Assessor's judgements, which will include reviewing learner work.

The learner work may be sampled before the learner has completed the full qualification, for example by sampling one or two assignments, topic areas or units, as the learner completes them.

The Internal Moderator should check that planning and reviewing has taken place and feedback is given to learners by the Assessor. The Internal Moderator will also check and confirm the accuracy of the application of any mark schemes, guidance and overall assessment decisions.

The Internal Moderator will therefore be able to evaluate the quality and consistency of the Assessor's assessment decisions and be able to identify any problems at an early stage. It will highlight individual Assessor training and development needs, which in turn can inform the programme of CPD for the assessment team as a whole.

The Internal Moderator must plan their sampling activities as outlined below.

1.6 Establishing a Sampling Strategy

Sampling should enable the Internal Moderator to evaluate how Assessors have reached their decisions. They must be able to follow documentation which clearly shows that Assessors have checked that the evidence presented meets the rules of evidence.

Evidence must be confirmed by Assessors as '**CRAVES**'

- **Current:** the work is relevant at the time of the assessment
- **Reliable:** the work is consistent with that produced by other learners
- **Authentic:** the work is the learner's own work
- **Valid:** the work is relevant and appropriate to the subject being assessed and is at the required level
- **Evaluated:** where the learner has not been assessed as competent, the deficiencies have been clearly and accurately identified via feedback to the learner resulting in improvements in knowledge or competency leading to the award
- **Sufficient:** the work covers the expected learning outcomes and any range statements as specified in the criteria or requirements in the assessment strategy.

1.7 Planning Sampling Activities

The Internal Moderator should consider the following when considering the volume of work that they should sample:

- the learners' ethnic origin, age and gender to ensure a representative range of learners are sampled
- the Assessors' experience and qualifications, workload and their occupational competence. For example, if Assessors are qualified and experienced it may not be necessary to look at everything in a learner's portfolio. If Assessors have less than 12 months' experience, are new to the centre or a particular qualification, or perhaps have not assessed for a length of time, the Internal Moderator will need to sample substantially more of their decisions for the first 6 - 12 months
- the full range of assessment methods used for any one qualification, for example observation, witness testimony, professional discussion, reflective accounts, questioning, assignments, products, RPL, simulation, etc and ensure a good, representative range of assessment evidence is sampled
- previous feedback to Assessors regarding good practice and/or involved highlighting development needs, for example If the Internal Moderator has a particular concern regarding the assessment decisions of a particular Assessor they should focus on increasing the volume of work from that Assessor to continue increased monitoring and evaluation of risk

- whether any changes have been implemented relating to the assessment of the qualification or its units, for example if there have been amendments to the qualification specification, or instances where industry practice or legislation has changed
- the range of locations where assessments have taken place
- the sampling process must not be determined by any rule of thumb such as '10%.'

1.8 Producing a Sampling Plan

The Internal Moderator must develop a sampling plan at the beginning of the learner's (or cohort's) programme and record, on the plan, which topic areas/assessment methods they plan to sample, and when.

Copies of sampling plans should be made available to other Internal Moderators and the assessment team, and sampling carried out according to the plan.

Where variations are made, these should be recorded on the plan.

1.9 Completing a Sample Record

The Internal Moderator should record the quality assurance sampling activities on a Sample Record. As a minimum, this record must indicate the Assessor's decision, the content of the sample, the Internal Moderator's decision and relevant feedback to the Assessor.

Where the Internal Moderator agrees with the assessment decisions, certification claims can go ahead.

Where the Internal Moderator does not agree with the assessment decisions, full feedback must be given to the Assessor, with action points agreed which relate to the Assessor's areas for improvement and instructions for how the learner can be supported to produce the required evidence of knowledge and skills.

Sampling must take place before any certification claims are made by the centre and all records, including those of standardisation meetings, feedback to Assessors and CPD activity should be made available to the GA-appointed External Moderator (also referred to as the EQA) upon request.

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