



Synoptic Exam Information for Candidates

The University of Liverpool provides the synoptic assessment as a separate examination on behalf of the RCVS. In this examination, candidates are encouraged to combine elements of their learning from different parts of the CertAVP programme in order to demonstrate their accumulated knowledge and understanding across the whole subject or species area in which they are being examined.

The synoptic examination is not a final examination for the modules; it is an examination for which a candidate presents himself/herself to be examined as an advanced practitioner in their particular subject/species area. **The general aim of CertAVP synoptic assessments is to ensure that candidates demonstrate coherence, integration and application of learning across the subject area concerned.** In order to achieve this aim, candidates will be required to demonstrate competence in the following areas:

Current knowledge and understanding

Candidates will be required to demonstrate *current* knowledge and understanding of the subject area or areas concerned, regardless of how much time has elapsed since they completed the required modules. Their knowledge base must include relevant pathophysiology, accepted and evidenced- based standards of patient care, and developments in diagnosis and management in the designated subject area.

Application and integration

Candidates will be required to demonstrate effective application and integration of learning across the designated subject area to their case approach and management. This must include application and integration of learning from the B module. This includes a systematic approach to clinical problems, demonstrating advanced clinical reasoning skills utilising evidence based veterinary medicine.

Professional practice

Candidates will be required to demonstrate an advanced approach to professional practice not just in the specific area being assessed but to veterinary practice as a whole. This must include application and integration of learning from the A module. Aspects that can be incorporated into examination questions include sound evidence of animal and public health protection including appropriate knowledge and application of biosecurity, health and safety etc. where appropriate; clear demonstration of animal welfare, professional conduct and veterinary ethics, and quality and safety in veterinary practice.

In particular, candidates will be expected to demonstrate awareness of their own level of expertise and how this guides their approach to veterinary practice. This should include, where appropriate, clear recognition of when a case maybe beyond their own capabilities and indications for referral.

Format

The synoptic assessment for equine, small animal and cross species designations will be in the format of both:

1. A face to face oral examination where each candidate will be examined by a suitable panel of examiners (30 minutes)

Using a case based format, questions will be asked with or without visual aids (e.g. PowerPoint, images, videos, radiographs) and examiners will ask questions about different aspects of the subject area with the aim to ensure the candidate is able to draw together all aspects of the CertAVP from disease principles; to clinical reasoning and evidence based practice in case approach and management; through to ethical, welfare, biosecurity and professional conduct aspects.

2. A practical/practical viva examination (30 minutes)

A practical or practical viva examination involving clinicopathological data, images, videos, animals, cadaver specimens or models will be undertaken. Candidates will be expected to, as in the oral examination, demonstrate a logical approach, integration and application of knowledge gained from across the designation area.

Candidates may be asked to demonstrate practical skills as appropriate for a synoptic exam depending on their area of designation.

On arrival on the day of examination, candidates will be asked to sign in. By signing in candidates are agreeing to abide by the University of Liverpool's Academic Integrity Policy and acknowledging that they are aware of their responsibility in regards to collusion. All candidates must hand in any bags and mobile phone to reception where they will be kept securely until after the examination.

Pre-examination reading or preparation:

Some designations will have up to 15 minutes of pre-examination preparation before the examination. This might consist of pre-reading material such as case details, or in the case of diagnostic imaging, candidates will have time to trial the imaging software that will be used in the examination. Any pre-exam preparation will be under exam conditions but will not be in the presence of an examiner.

Examiners

There will be a minimum of two suitably qualified academic clinicians examining. A third external examiner appointed by the University of Liverpool will also be present for part or all of the examination. The role of the external examiner is to provide additional validation of the examination. Sometimes there may also be an RCVS observer present.

Format of the examination – detail

Oral Examination Further Information:

You will be examined on two to three clinical cases. You may be presented with a PowerPoint presentation or a video of a case with details and images or other materials. In each question, you should be aware that it is a combination of factors that make up your overall grade and the main thing examined is your approach to the case so you must clearly state your clinical reasoning and thought processes and describe the cases using the correct terminology.

What are the presenting signs? Problems? Differential diagnoses? Which test is most appropriate first? Why? Why might you select one diagnostic test over another? What factors might need to be considered in the case specifically presented to you? As a general tip to study you should look at case presentations and think about your approach to diagnosis, problem lists, differential diagnoses and management.

You will not be examined on intricate details or be expected to quote papers and scientific research; this has already been assessed in your certificate modules. In the synoptic examination, it is your ability to put all of this knowledge together in your approach to cases as they are presented to you, which will be assessed. This includes your ability to draw together the subjects covered in the A and B modules (ethics, welfare, biosecurity aspects, clinical reasoning, and evidence based veterinary medicine) as well as the relevant subject specific approaches.

A quote from a previous successful internal medicine delegate:

“The examiners are not looking for pattern recognition – they want to see a logical approach to working up the case. You should be prepared to see clinical cases of things you have perhaps not come across before - the question is, can you work them up logically rather than making an instant diagnosis through pattern recognition?”

Practical Examination Further Information:

For all designations part 2 of the examination will consist of either a practical exam **OR** a practical viva exam. In the practical examination candidates are examined on hands on diagnostic or therapeutic techniques. In a “practical viva” candidates are tested on their “practical approach” (see below)

Option 1 - Practical exam

For the following designations there is a practical exam:

- Equine Surgery
- Equine Dentistry
- Equine Stud Medicine
- Veterinary Anaesthesia
- Veterinary Diagnostic Imaging
- Equine lameness diagnosis and therapeutics

You may be asked to demonstrate one or more practical techniques or procedures on cadaver material or a live animal, or demonstrate the use of relevant equipment. Where applicable (surgery designations) any surgical procedure would be a basic surgery, and may be from the surgery list from the modules or might include common diagnostic or minor surgical procedures not on the list.

The list of RCVS 'commonly performed surgical procedures' for soft tissue and orthopaedic surgery is included as a separate document for those delegates undertaking a synoptic examination in one of the surgical disciplines

NB For these designations please remember to bring personal protective equipment such as overalls, protective footwear and waterproofs

Option 2 – “Practical viva” exam

For the following designations there is a practical viva exam

- Small Animal Surgery
- Small Animal Medicine
- Feline Medicine
- Equine Medicine
- Equine Practice
- Emergency and Critical Care
- Veterinary Cardiology
- Veterinary Dermatology

For the “practical viva” you may be asked to view clinical material either as PowerPoint, video or other materials. In the practical examination you will be asked more practical questions about the cases and this may include interpretation of images or diagnostic test results, how you might administer something, restraint, processes and logistics of the actual process, but the examination will still be in an oral viva format.

Again, you will be assessed on your approach and reasoning process in the workup and management of the cases, as well as the actual practical aspects. The questions, cases, materials and overall process will be consistent for each candidate for each designation on any particular day. The only exception to this is for those designations where it is possible to request a large animal or small animal slant, such as Veterinary Cardiology, Veterinary Dermatology and Veterinary Anaesthesia.

Disability support

If you have a disability (e.g. dyslexia) then any disclosure must be made to the Disability Support Team (<http://www.liverpool.ac.uk/studentsupport/disability/>) and the Examinations Officer, Michael Weston (mjweston@liverpool.ac.uk), **prior** to the exam so that any individual support you may require can be put in place for you.

Grading

The synoptic examination is a **pass/fail** examination- you do not receive a final grade. Examiners will assess you against the RCVS marking scheme descriptor (see below) and using this as a guide you need to score 5 or above to be considered a pass for each question. You may still pass the examination overall if you are weaker on one question, however candidates demonstrating dangerous or unprofessional practice in any single part of the examination can automatically fail regardless of their performance overall. Results are returned by email within 5 working days of the examination but not sooner than 3 working days post examination to allow candidates to submit extenuating circumstances if required.

Retaking the examination

Candidates who fail the synoptic assessment will be given one opportunity to retake the assessment. After two attempts candidates may be asked to undertake further training and/or advised to retake modules at the examiner's discretion. A third attempt at the synoptic examination may be allowed at the discretion of the RCVS CertAVP sub-committee.

Extenuating circumstances and absence from examinations

Prior to the examination date, candidates will be emailed details about what to do if due to illness or other personal circumstances they will be unable to attend. Where candidates attend the examination but feel extenuating circumstances may have affected their performance, the details and deadlines for submission to the extenuating circumstances committee will also be included in the body of this email.

Cancellation Policy

A three-month cancellation policy applies to synoptic examination bookings. Unfortunately candidates who cancel or postpone their place after this period will forfeit the full fee and will not be entitled to a refund.

RCVS Marking Scheme descriptor

Mark	Descriptor	Standard
7-10	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The candidate demonstrated excellent powers of analysis and argument with a thorough understanding of concepts, methodology and content relevant to the questions asked. There was clear and unequivocal evidence of critical judgement in selecting, ordering and analysing information to construct sound arguments, with responses that frequently revealed insight and/or originality. There was clear and unequivocal evidence of critical understanding of professional practice relevant to the specific discipline being assessed and to veterinary practice as a whole. The candidate's responses were perfect, or near perfect, with no errors of significance
5-7	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The candidate demonstrated good powers of analysis and argument and a good understanding of the concepts, methodology and content relevant to the questions asked. There was good evidence of critical judgement in selecting, organising and synthesising information to construct arguments. There was good evidence of critical understanding of professional practice relevant to the specific discipline being assessed and to veterinary practice as a whole. The candidate's responses contained few errors, and all errors were minor
3-5	Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The candidate demonstrated some powers of analysis and argument and a reasonable understanding of the concepts, methodology and content relevant to the questions asked. There was evidence of lack of knowledge and understanding of key elements of the discipline being assessed. There was limited evidence of critical judgement in selecting, organising and synthesising information to construct sound arguments. There was evidence of lack of critical understanding of professional practice relevant to the specific discipline being assessed and to veterinary practice as a whole. The candidate's responses contained several errors. These errors may or may not have endangered the life or health of patients, owners, staff or other animals but clearly indicated that patient care would not have been adequate.
1-3	Poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The candidate demonstrated little understanding or knowledge of underpinning pathophysiology or clinical medicine pertinent to the cases and the questions asked about them. Responses were flawed by omissions, errors, misunderstanding of key concepts, irrelevancies and lack of organisation. There was very limited evidence of reasoning and justification to support the selection of case management options. Established and appropriate methods solutions to clinical and professional problems were generally identified but were applied uncritically. There was limited evidence of critical understanding of professional practice, whether relevant to the specific discipline being assessed or to veterinary practice as a whole. The candidate's responses contained an unacceptable number of errors, some of which would have been likely to compromise the health of patients, owners, staff or other animals.
0-1	Very poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The candidate demonstrated fundamental flaws in knowledge and very limited understanding of the subject material. Responses contained very little information of relevance to the discipline or cases being assessed. There was no evidence of reasoning and justification to support the selection of case management options. There was no evidence of critical understanding of professional practice, whether relevant to the discipline being assessed or to veterinary practice as a whole.. The candidate's responses contained an unacceptable number of errors, many of which would have been likely to compromise the health of patients, owners, staff or other animals.