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Claire qualified as a veterinary nurse in 1990, and has worked as an Internal Verifier for MYF Training since 2006. She is also a past president of the BVNA. Her interests lie in critical care nursing, clinical pathology and feline medicine, as well as the training of student veterinary nurses.

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Figure 1. Claire Fraser reviewing a student enrolment form with administration manager, Charlotte Osborne



# Quality assurance – working as an Internal Verifier

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**ABSTRACT:** The role of the Internal Verifier is a varied and rewarding one. I feel that the experience of working as a veterinary nurse and assessor in practice has given me the skills to provide the best support and guidance to those who are still working in those roles. It can be extremely difficult to juggle responsibilities as an employee/employer in the veterinary practice environment, and so the Internal Verifier must be supportive, encouraging, flexible and approachable. There are rules and regulations to follow, but sometimes, the route to achieving them is not always 'black & white'. Everyone works in a slightly different way, and so for me, being able to help a clinical coach train their student to the best of their ability can be challenging but also extremely rewarding.

Before I took on the role of an Internal Verifier (IV), I had worked in mixed and small animal practice for several years – both as a veterinary nurse and as an assessor – gaining my D32/33 qualification in 1997 at the Berkshire College of Agriculture along the way.

In 2000, I moved to Guernsey, where I trained other members of staff to achieve their D32/33 assessor units, as well as carrying out my normal nursing duties at the Route Isabelle Veterinary Practice. I also achieved the D34 (quality assurance) unit, as I felt it would provide me with a better understanding of my assessor role.

Returning to mainland UK in 2004, I joined a practice as a consulting nurse and assessor. However, my increasing interest in the quality assurance aspect of VN training led to a temporary position combining teaching and internal verification.

This maternity cover post confirmed my wish to continue working as an IV, and in 2006, Julie Ouston offered me a full-time position as an Internal Verifier with MYF Training, where I still work today. Soon after starting here, I gained the V1 (internal verifier) qualification, to update the D34 quality assurance certificate that I already held.

## Multifaceted role

My role as an Internal Verifier (or Quality Assurance Manager as it is known in other organisations) is a varied one.

However, my main objective is to ensure that student veterinary nurses are trained to a specific standard within the veterinary workplace. This requires very good communication and time management skills, as well as being flexible, a good listener, a negotiator/mediator, and above all, having a passion for the job.

What I enjoy most about working for a private course provider, such as MYF Training, is that we only deal with the VN training scheme.

VN training has changed over the years, since my student days working with the 'little green book'. It progressed relatively unscathed through the NVQ system to where it is now – the Diploma in Veterinary Nursing. Now there are also Veterinary Nursing Degree programmes (Foundation and BSc), but my job is solely concerned with the Diploma.

My working days vary considerably, depending on whether I am based at the college, or out visiting practices.

My duties when at the college include:

- sampling the work done by clinical coaches (previously known as assessors) on the Nursing Progress Log (NPL)
- making sure that staff and students have included the relevant information that confirms adequate and suitable training and assessment has taken place in practice
- conducting tutorials with students working in the practices assigned to me
- preparing and presenting clinical coach training courses and standardization events
- liaising with the MYF teaching team, to ensure that the students are supported in the best way possible
- communicating with students, coaches and other members of the practice team on the telephone or by e-mail; and, of course,
- all the paperwork.

Looking after so many practices, coaches and students, it is extremely important to keep up to date with paperwork (Figure 1). I currently look after approximately 50 training practices (TPs), 80+ clinical coaches, and about 80 to 90 students. There are two other Internal Verifiers at MYF Training who have similar practice numbers to look after.

Each practice needs to be visited two or three times per year depending on how many coaches and students they have; so some of my time is spent out and about, covering a large part of the South of England.

I enjoy this part of my job immensely because it allows me to meet and to help practices and coaches to train their students to the best of their ability. It has to be appreciated that these are all busy working practices, whose sole purpose is to provide the best possible care for their patients and clients.

## Demanding, yet sensitive approach

Training a student veterinary nurse can be very difficult at times, as there are many other duties a clinical coach may have to undertake alongside this role. One of my jobs is to help make sure the coaches are able to carry out both roles effectively, and sometimes this can be quite a challenge!



Figure 2. Claire Fraser assessing student, Kerry Brooker (indirect method of quality assuring the work of a clinical coach)

Whilst visiting the practices, I must make sure the environment in which the student is working is suitable for VN training, and that it is safe. A full practice check is carried out at least once a year – focusing on things such as the facilities, equipment, health & safety, caseloads, and staff numbers. Other visits focus on observing the clinical coach working with their students, assessing the students directly, and also checking that any IV actions identified in previous visits have been completed satisfactorily (Figure 2).

I feel it is important to build a trusting and friendly relationship with key practice staff as soon as possible, as this can only help improve training standards within the practice. I am very lucky to be able to look after many training practices whose standards are very high – both in veterinary medicine and nursing care, as well as in VN training.

## Keeping in touch

I have mentioned previously that communication is important when working as an Internal Verifier. Not only do I have to make sure I speak regularly to the students and practice staff, I must communicate clearly with the staff at MYF Training.

There are three Internal Verifiers in the MYF Training team, and it is critical that we speak to each other regularly, so that we ‘sing from the same hymn sheet’ when advising students and/or coaches, so we do not confuse them. We meet every month, to report on all matters concerning quality assurance.

I must also ensure that I stay in regular contact with the MYF tutors, to ensure that students receive the appropriate support from everyone. It also helps me keep up to date with the progress of their



Figure 3. Administration manager, Charlotte Osborne, taking a call

academic training, and any changes in the syllabus.

I also work closely with our administration team, who keep all the systems and documents up to date at MYF Training, and who help keep me sane when things are getting extremely busy! Their numerous duties include dealing with enrolments, NPL set up and troubleshooting and, of course, they are the first people our clients and students usually speak to when contacting the college (Figure 3).

And finally, our Head of Centre must be kept up to date at all times, as she is the main link between us and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and more recently City & Guilds.

The quality assurance process is a complex mechanism within this profession, as it involves helping many different practices meet the needs of the Centre, the Awarding Body and the Regulatory Body, as well as the students. However, it is a role that brings great personal satisfaction when I see the quality of training being provided both in the workplace and at the college. I am privileged and proud to be in a position to help practices and students flourish within the training system. [vni](#)