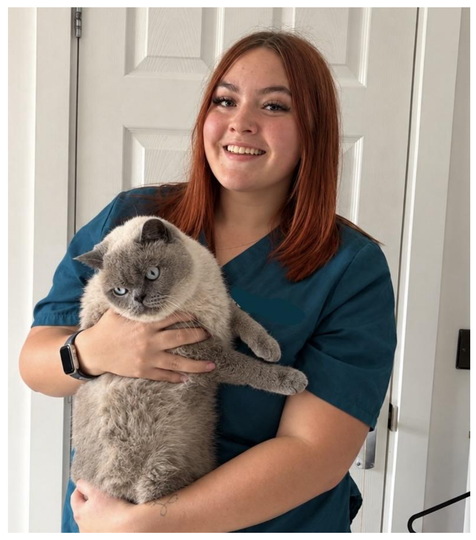
A Qualitative Investigation into Thoughts and Opinions of Veterinary Nurses on Confidence Gained Through Different Qualification Routes.



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Background

To qualify as a Registered veterinary nurse (RVN), a student must complete a Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) accredited course, through either further or higher education, to achieve either a Level 3 Diploma, Bachelor's of Science with Honours (BSc (Hons)), or Foundation Degree in Science (FdSc) (RCVS, *n.d.*).

Having self-confidence is vital as an RVN, alongside knowledge and skills, it is an important influencing factor on competence (Dunne *et al.*, 2020). Education institutions play a key role in ensuring students are competent and confident to practise as an RVN. Current literature indicates a paucity surrounding both Student Veterinary Nurse's (SVN) and RVN's perceptions of confidence, and whether this is affected by qualification route.

Research Aims and Objectives

- To evaluate the different thoughts and opinions of veterinary nurses on confidence between different qualification routes.
- To clarify the differences between veterinary nursing qualification routes.
- To investigate the awareness around different routes when planning to undertake a veterinary nursing qualification.



Figure 1: RVN Badge (CAW, 2012)

Materials and Methods

A questionnaire was created in Jisc, to compare qualification route, and other demographic information, against confidence in Day-One Skills (DOS).

Questionnaire participants were further invited to anonymously register their interest to take part in semi-structured interviews.

The questionnaire was distributed through social media, and emails to heads of veterinary nursing educational institutions and the British Veterinary Nursing Association.

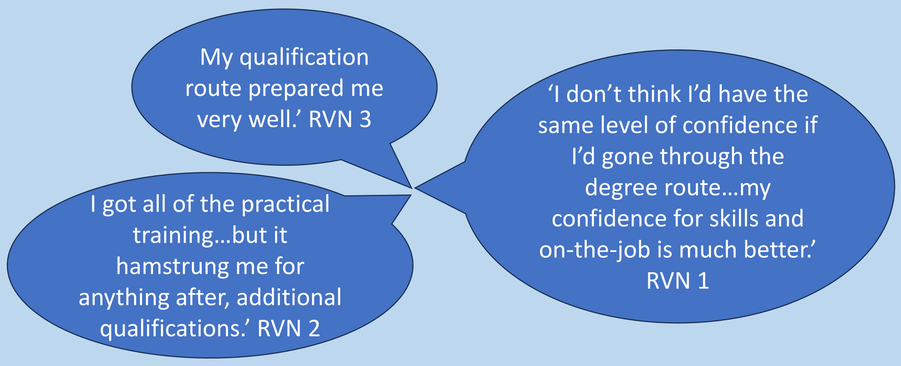
Questionnaire responses were exported into Microsoft Excel and analysed using GenStat. Chi-squared permutation tests, ANOVA and t-tests were used to test for significant associations.

The interviews were conducted in Microsoft Teams and transcribed to be analysed using thematic analysis. This provided quotes and trends.

Results

Interviews:

- 3 RVNs participated in interviews.
- RVN 1 and 2 qualified through the Level 3 Diploma, and RVN 3 qualified through FdSc, before completing a top-up to BSc (Hons).
- Each participant felt their route equipped them to feel confident in practice. However, Level 3 Diploma participants highlighted potential hindrance of career progression.
- All three participants displayed an overall good understanding of the differences between the qualification routes.
- A limited awareness of alternative qualification routes was highlighted, indicating the need for clearer, accessible information to support informed decision-making.



Questionnaire:

- 129 participants eligible for statistical analysis.
- The split between participants' qualification routes are shown in *Figure 2*.
- No statistically significant association was identified between qualification route and any of the 44 individual Day-One Skills.
- Mean confidence scores were calculated for each route (*Figure 3).* ANOVA indicated no statistically significant difference between these (p=0.484).
- RVN and SVN confidence scores were compared, and this was statistically significant (t=-3.29, d.f.= 126, p=0.001), implying that being qualified and working has a positive effect on confidence

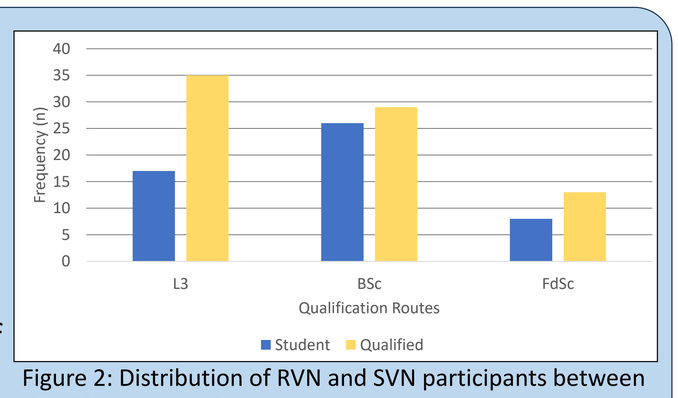


Figure 2: Distribution of RVN and SVN participants between the different qualification routes

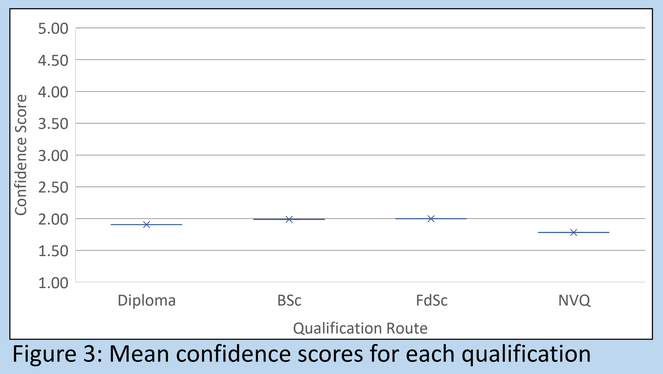


Figure 3: Mean confidence scores for each qualification route

Despite no statistical significance across individual DOS, the study highlighted the DOS that RVNs and SVNs felt most and least confident in (*Figure 4-5*).

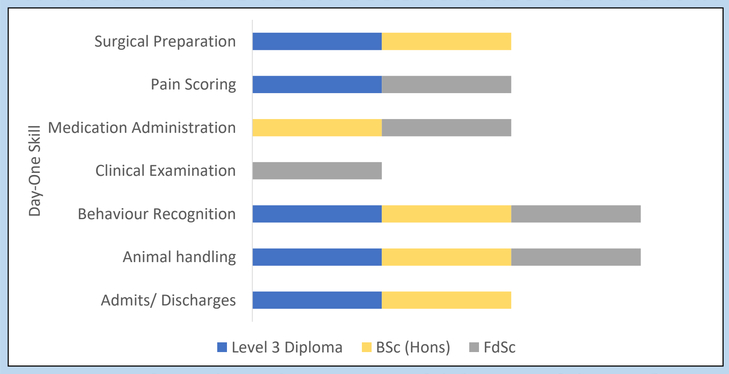


Figure 4: Top five subjects' participants felt least confident in for each qualification route

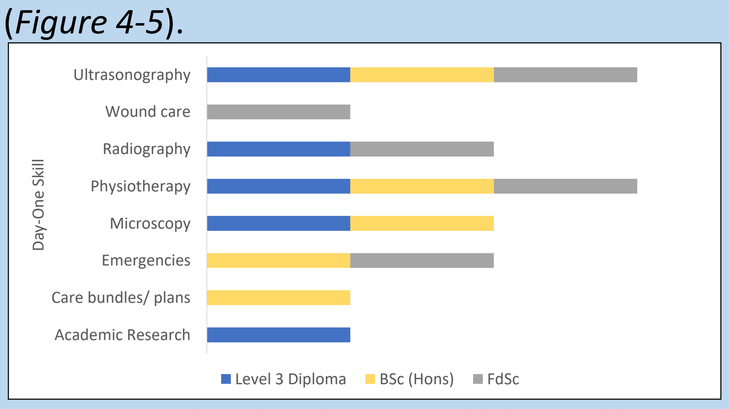


Figure 5: Bottom five subjects' participants felt least confident in for each qualification route

These suggested areas where educational institutions are preparing RVNs very well, compared to areas in which RVNs do not feel as well prepared, due to knowledge, skills and confidence being major influencing factors on competence.

Discussion and Conclusions

- Confidence in DOS did not differ by qualification route, indicating all RCVS-accredited pathways produce similarly confident graduates.
- Mean confidence scores showed RVNs and SVNs generally feel confident in their Day-One Skills, with RVNs displaying higher confidence due to workplace experience.
- Interview findings supported this: with all participants feeling well prepared for practice, though Level 3 Diploma RVNs noted limitations in career progression.
- Participants understood the differences between qualification routes but reported limited awareness of alternatives when initially choosing their pathway.
- As confidence, alongside knowledge and skills, is a major influencing factor on competence, results imply SVNs are being well prepared for registration.
- The study emphasises the need for clearer, accessible information to support veterinary nursing applicants in making informed decisions about qualification route.
- Qualification routes differ by learning style, financial considerations, study location and qualification level; an applicant should consider each of these points before picking a route.

Limitations and Recommendations

- Small sample size: The study response rate was 36%, producing a margin of error of 8%.
- Subjectivity of confidence: Individuals' will have different perceptions, which may affect results.
- Further research is recommended with larger sample sizes: into confidence and its influencing factors, and for where accessible information should be provided to make an informed decision on qualification route.

References

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