

**Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice
C-VGP.2 Veterinary General Practice –
Consultation Skills**

Module Syllabus



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Contents

Introduction.....	3
Aim	3
Learning outcomes	3
Enrolment advice	5
Assessment	6
Assessment timetable	7
Assessment weighting	7
Learning support.....	8
Reflective essay.....	9
Case studies	11
Summary essay	13
Instructions for submitting work.....	15
Recommended reading list.....	17

Introduction

The module is intended to be an in-depth exploration of consultation models in veterinary practice followed by a critical self-analysis of practice leading to the development of the candidate's own consultation model. It is relevant for those who are following a range of disciplines and wish to obtain a good understanding and effective model of consultation for a first-opinion practice environment.

Aim

The aim of this module is to enable you to extend and consolidate your knowledge and practice of consultation gained at undergraduate level and within the first years of practice. You will develop, through adaptation and synthesis of known consultation models, an in-depth understanding of the application of that knowledge to achieve a personal model of a successful consultation. You will be able to evaluate your own practice and develop strategies for continuous improvement in the future.

Learning outcomes

After successful completion of this module, you will have achieved the following learning objectives:

Consultation models

- You are aware of a variety of different consultation models that are in use within the veterinary and medical profession
- You are able to compare your own actual practice within a consultation with that suggested within one or more of these consultation models
- You have identified any development issues highlighted by this comparison and can evidence how you have made use of this information to improve your performance within the consulting room

Successful consultations

- You can identify the various stakeholders of your professional consultations, can explore, acknowledge and empathise with your expectations and successfully negotiate to achieve a 'win-win' solution
- You can evaluate different definitions of what a successful consultation is and compare, contrast and justify these with your own personally developed definition and that of the rest of the practice team
- You continuously evidence and critically appraise your own consultations against your personal definition of a successful consultation
- You continuously explore your personal practice within consultations to find development opportunities
- You plan, implement and critically appraise the results following changes you have undertaken in response to a perceived development opportunity to improve your consultation skills

Measurement of consultation skills

- You have developed an ongoing personal understanding of the knowledge, behaviour, beliefs and attitude required for a successful consultation as defined by your own model of practice
- You are aware of a wide range of possible tools to measure your consultation skills
- You can measure how successful you are in your consultations and are able to justify the relevance of such measurements
- You enter into verbal and written communication with other professionals to share the lessons learnt in developing and using various measuring tools within a consultation
- You are aware of, and are able to, successfully negotiate any potential ethical issues when measuring consultation skills of either themselves or of other members of your team. This will include the need to obtain informed consent from clients.

Time management

- You are aware of the factors and issues that impact on time management within the consultation process and are able to take these into account and initiate appropriate action as required during your consulting sessions
- You can identify ways to do things differently in the future to improve your time management and evidence how you have gone about undertaking this change and what the results were

Enrolment advice

The module is intended to be an in-depth exploration of consultation models in veterinary practice followed by a critical self-analysis of practice leading to the development of your own consultation model. It is relevant for those who are following a range of disciplines and wish to obtain a good understanding and effective model of consultation for a first-opinion practice environment.

Coverage of this module may be integrated with others, particularly other B and C modules. All candidates will normally have completed A-FAVP.1 Foundations of Advanced Veterinary Practice module, and at least one of the practice B modules, before undertaking a C module, although you can choose to work through modules in a different order if you wish. In whichever order modules are tackled, compliance with best practice for all the topics covered by module A-FAVP.1 will be expected whenever these are appropriate in C modules. For example, awareness of, and compliance with, all relevant legislation, welfare and ethical principles will be required throughout.

You are advised to plan a structured programme of continuing professional development to help you achieve your objectives. Involvement in 'learning sets' and networks of other candidates working towards the same or similar modules is encouraged; this could be initiated by the candidates themselves via RVC Learn. The RCVS considers that candidates will need advisers/mentors to support them through the certificate.

Assessment

Summative assessment – work contributing to your final grade

- A reflective essay critically evaluating a number of different consultation models to inform the development of your own. Outline and justify the development of your personalised model of practice, including discussion of your own definition of success, the skills needed to succeed, measures you are utilising to appraise your consultations in practice and your own personal development (1,750 words)
- Two case studies critically reflecting on your consultations (2 x 1,250 words)*
- A final summary essay covering the entire learning journey: what you have learned through this module and how it will inform your future consultations (1,750 words, last 500 words are for reflection on self)

* For preference, the submission should include audio/video tapes of the consultations with a detailed commentary or fully annotated transcripts. The consultations chosen should indicate a breadth of application of the model therefore the candidate will wish to include routine and non-routine consultations, at different levels of challenge (for example, complex cases, challenging situations, financially challenged clients, euthanasia, emergency consults). It is essential that there is a full explanation of the consultation technique that the candidate utilised. A copy of the documentation evidencing informed consent by participating clients must be included in the submission.

Formative assessment – feedback to help you improve prior to submission

We offer you an opportunity to present your work (1 x case study and your consulting model essay) before you submit for the summative assessment. This is reviewed by a single assessor who will provide substantive feedback to support the development of the work and help you plan for your final submission.

You may choose to submit a selection of appendices to evidence your development:

- Items situating you within your workplace (e.g. CV, Job Description)
- Learning diary (a small selection of relevant extracts)
- Consult interaction transcripts (a small selection of relevant extracts, fully anonymised)
- Permissions pertaining to conversation transcripts (required)

Assessment timetable

Work may be submitted at any time during the year and will be assessed within approximately 8 weeks of receipt.

Assessment weighting

- 1 x reflective essay (1,750 words) 30%
- 2 x case studies (2,500 words) 40% (20% each)
- 1 x summary essay (1,750 words) 30%

Learning support

Learning support is provided to aid self-directed learning and to provide easy access to published articles. You will be given a username and password which will allow you to log on to 4 different systems:

1. RVC Learn (<http://learn.rvc.ac.uk/>)

- Access to discussion forums that are used by all CertAVP candidates and RVC tutors
- Assessment webinar
- Reflective log for you to keep your own notes and thoughts.
- A webinar which contains guidance on preparing written work for this module.
- Access to the RVC online library. This is invaluable when researching literature for writing up case reports. This means that (with rare exception) all journal articles that you want to view can be downloaded to your PC with a few mouse clicks. This includes original research articles as well as review articles and case reports. IT and Library support is available for this facility (email library@rvc.ac.uk or helpdesk@rvc.ac.uk).
- There are also several CPD courses run each year at the RVC that support some of the learning outcomes for C modules. CertAVP candidates receive a 20% discount on RVC CPD courses – please contact the CertAVP office for further details.

2. RVC Intranet (<https://intranet.rvc.ac.uk>)

Access to all information available to all RVC students and employees, for example, news, events, policies, committees, services, Library, IT helpdesk, etc.

3. Athens (<http://www.openathens.net/>)

A huge amount of any library's information is now available online, e.g. electronic journals, e-books and databases. 'Athens' is a system used by UK universities for controlling access to these type of online services and with your username and password, you can access many of a library's online databases, electronic journals and e-books seamlessly.

4. Email (<http://mail.rvc.ac.uk>)

You are given an RVC email address, which is **compulsory** to use for CertAVP communication and submission of work.

Reflective essay

A reflective essay critically evaluating a number of different consultation models to inform the development of your own. Outline and justify the development of your personalised model of practice, including discussion of your own definition of success, the skills needed to succeed, measures you are utilising to appraise your consultations in practice and your own personal development (1,750 words)

This assessment piece requires you to take a deeper look into the different consultation models that have been developed in human and veterinary medicine to categorise what goes on between a healthcare professional and a patient/client. You will use this exploration to develop a personal consultation model. You will then use this model to underpin a personal development plan for your own consults.

A number of different ways of conceptualising the healthcare provider and patient/client relationship and interaction exist in the medical field, and one notable example in the veterinary field. Some of them are heavily task related and others address more of the relationship between the interactants and how this impacts health.

In this assessment, select 2-3 recognised consultation models and provide a critical appraisal that includes;

- Theoretical background
- Strengths and limitations when applied to the veterinary field
- Relevance to professional communication and client engagement
- Consideration of the skills required to run effective consults

From this appraisal, design a personalised consultation model that

- Reflects your own professional values and that of your colleagues and practice/business
- Demonstrates awareness of the challenges faced in modern veterinary practice
- Discusses the challenges of measurement of outcomes
- Incorporates an element of reflection and subsequent plans for self-development

Advice for the assessment

This assessment requires you to undertake a critical appraisal which means to judge the value of something in context. For this, you will need to have a good understanding of the models, their origins and underpinning theory and development.

Use this critical appraisal to help you make sense of your own challenges and what you've learned about yourself and your own need for growth in this area.

You cannot cover all of the learning outcomes in each of these assignments but do pay attention to which you are covering in each one, so you can demonstrate effective coverage of each of the outcomes across the suite of assessments.

Case studies

You are required to complete two case studies of different consultations with clients. Whilst you will not be able to demonstrate all that you are learning on the module, the selection of these consultations will allow you to explore your developing approach. They are not meant to show 'perfect' practice, rather their inclusion here is to demonstrate how your consultation model works in practice and how your interpersonal skills are developing.

Select two consults that you feel are reflective of the way that you are working, and which illustrate key elements of your model. This should involve covering a selection of the learning outcomes of the module.

As a reflective commentary on both your model in practice and your own personal communication, the key elements to these case studies are your ability to both critically evaluate the model that you have developed and to be able to assess your own performance against the criteria you have developed.

It is expected that as part of this assessment, a video (or audio) recording is made of a consultation and this will be made available to the assessor. You need to have obtained appropriate written permission from the clients and another other team members present.

Advice for the assessment

Your case studies should demonstrate your understanding of your client and their context and the rationale for your choice relating to your consulting model. It is helpful here to consider specifically what elements of the model are you exploring in this consult.

You will need to address any ethical underpinnings of your approach.

Although there will be discussion of diagnostic plans and treatments, the assessment is about the communication and other non-clinical elements of the consult. There is no requirement to address the medical details except where they relate to context.

Finally, the case studies will be assessed against the learning outcomes for the module, and will be interpreted in terms of the work you present. You cannot cover all of the learning outcomes in each of these assignments but do pay attention to which you are covering in

each one, so you can demonstrate effective coverage of each of the outcomes across the suite of assessments.

Your aim should be to demonstrate a sound understanding of the constructs within a consult, and the trajectory of your own personal development.

Summary essay

A final summary essay covering the entire learning journey: what you have learned through this module and how it will inform your future consultations (1,750 words, last 500 words are for reflection on self)

The final summary essay is a 1,750 word essay which should be completed once you have had the reflective essay and case studies assessed.

Advice for the essay

As a start for this essay, it will help to consider why you did this module. What were you hoping to achieve? It might be that there were certain challenges you wanted to address eg talking about money, keeping to time, or ensuring client adherence. You will no doubt have others.

What have you learned in this module, through exploring the different models and creating your own, thinking about the skills needed for effective consults and how you wish to evaluate your success? How has this helped you in your original goals? What challenges and questions do you still have? Have you learned something unexpected? What else has this module helped you realise?

In this final essay, it is appropriate to go back to the other assignments and learning diary (if you kept one) to review and reevaluate your thinking and to consider this in the light of the literature and other experiences.

Deep reflections tend to use a repeating cycle, going back and forwards, taking your understanding and learning to a deeper level each time.

You will have developed your own consultation model and considered your own skills and your intentions for further development in the first assignment. You will have then tried out some these plans, reflected on the success and challenges and made intentions to develop your approach further through the two case studies.

Finally, in this assignment, we ask you to take an overview of this whole process and discuss your learning, reflecting on what you've learned about consultations and also about what you've learned about yourself. This is a key part of the reflective process. You need to

look forward and decide how you will act differently in the future, applying what you have learned.

There are a number of reflective cycles you can use as a basis for your work, but it can be helpful to base the essay using the reflective **Three Whats** approach:

- **What?** (did I do/observe/write about)
- **So What?** (did I learn)
- **Now What?** (how will this change my practice in the future?).

Instructions for submitting work

Please ensure that your work includes this table on the front page:

Student name:	
Module:	C-VPG.2
Piece of work:	
Word count:	

All work is submitted online via Learn; you will be given further instructions when you enrol.

Word counts

Word counts, where quoted are the maximum accepted unless otherwise stated.

Submissions over count may be returned unmarked. The word counts for this module are 6,000 words maximum.

Tables, figure legends, appendices and reference list are **not** included in the word count. The report title and titles within the report **are** included. You should not put important information into a table to avoid the word count; only numerical data should appear within a table. In the interests of fairness to all candidates the word count is strictly adhered to and reports that exceed it will be returned unmarked.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. Work submitted to RVC for assessment may be examined using Turnitin. We would advise you to examine your own work prior to submission to ensure it does not present a problem.

References

All references should be cited in the text. Avoid listing references that are not cited in the text or vice versa.

References should be placed immediately after the piece of work to which it relates. We recommend using Harvard referencing as described by the Anglia-Ruskin University (<http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm>). You will find it very helpful to use a

program such as Endnote® or Reference manager® to organise your references.

Appendices (excluding those listed on page 6)

- You may include appendices to provide evidence to support the learning outcomes described within the submission.
- The assessors are not obliged to read the appendices in detail so please only include relevant items of evidence.
- The appendices may not be used to provide additional information that should be within the submission. Any such information will not be marked and will not contribute to the overall grade.
- Images may be included here or in the main body of text. Only include images that you think are specifically relevant as these generally enhance your submission.
- All items containing personal information should be anonymised

Recommended reading list

The following list is given as a guide as to where to start and for this reason cannot be considered 'complete'. We also don't expect you to read texts from cover to cover or to use all of the texts listed, however we do recommend you make use of the most recent edition of textbooks where available. We apologise if you feel a particular favourite is missing - feel free to use the Learn discussion board to pass on additional suggestions to other candidates.

Textbooks:

If you are planning on buying textbooks ensure that you buy the most recent edition and check before purchase that a new edition is not about to be published.

- Adams, C.L. and Kurtz, S. (2016) *Skills for communicating in veterinary medicine*. London: CRC Press.
- Coe, J. and Shaw, J. (2024) *Developing communication skills for veterinary practice*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.
- Englar, R.E. (2020) *A guide to oral communication in veterinary medicine*. Sheffield: 5m Publishing. ISBN 9781789180954.
- Fine, K., *Narrative medicine in veterinary practice: improving client communication, patient care, and veterinary well-being*.
- Gray, C. and Moffat, K. (2010) *Handbook of veterinary communication skills*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell.

Journals:

In the last few years, there has been more emphasis on communication in the literature and Vet Record and other journals have published primary research and review articles on consultation skills.

There is a specific medical communication journal that publishes many papers on human medical communication: many of the papers are quite specific, but there are some good overviews here too. It's worth a browse:

- *Patient Education and Counseling* (PEC) is the Official journal of [EACH, the International Association for Communication in Health Care](#) and [ACH, the Academy of Communication in Healthcare](#).

Articles:

The following is a list that you can select from, but it is not intended that you will read and use all of the references. Gaining an appreciation of the breadth, depth and complexity of the subject is a key to this module. You are expected to demonstrate a wide appreciation of the subject through your professional practice, supported by reading and reference to the literature.

General

- Adams, C.L. & Frankel, R.M., 2007. It may be a dog's life but the relationship with her owners is also key to her health and well-being: communication in veterinary medicine. *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice*, 37(1), pp.1–17.
- Pun, J.K.H., 2020. An integrated review of the role of communication in veterinary clinical practice. *BMC Veterinary Research*, 16, p.394.
- Shaw, J.R., 2006. Four core communication skills of highly effective practitioners. *Veterinary Clinics: Small Animal Practice*, 36(2), pp.385–396.
- Shaw, J.R., Bonnett, B.N., Adams, C.L. & Roter, D.L., 2006. Veterinarian, client and patient communication patterns used during clinical appointments in companion animal practice. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 228(5), pp.714721

Consultation models

- Denness, C. (2013). What are consultation models for? *InnovAiT Education and Inspiration for General Practice*, 6(9), 592–599. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1755738013475436>
- Everitt, S., Pilnick, A., Waring, J. & Cobb, M., 2013. The structure of the small animal consultation. *Journal of Small Animal Practice*, 54(9), pp.453–458
- Frankel, R.M. & Stein, T., 2001. Getting the most out of the clinical encounter: the four habits model. *The Journal of Medical Practice Management*, 16(4), pp.184–191. PMID: 11317576.
- Radford, A., Stockley, P., Silverman, J., Taylor, I., Turner, R. & Gray, C., 2006. Development, teaching, and evaluation of a consultation structure model for use in veterinary education. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*, 33(1), pp.38–44.

You are advised to look at other models in the medical sector for a deeper understanding.

Outcomes

- Corah L, Mossop L, Cobb K, Dean R. Measuring the success of specific health problem consultations in cats and dogs: a systematic review. *Vet Rec.* 2018 Jul 7;183(1):22. doi: 10.1136/vr.104759. Epub 2018 Mar 15. PMID: 29545354.

Challenges in consultations

- Belshaw, Z., Dean, R. & Asher, L., 2020. Slowing down to speed up? The importance of communication in companion animal practice. *Veterinary Record*, 186(14), p.472.
- Coe, J. B., Adams, C. L., & Bonnett, B. N. (2007). A focus group study of veterinarians' and pet owners' perceptions of the monetary aspects of veterinary care. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 231(10), 1510-1518.
- Shaw, J. & Lagoni, L., 2007. End-of-life communication in veterinary medicine: delivering bad news and euthanasia decision making. *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice*, 37(1), pp.95–108

Shared decision making

- Elwyn, G., Durand, M. A., Song, J., Aarts, J., Barr, P. J., Berger, Z., Cochran, N., Frosch, D., Galasiński, D., Gulbrandsen, P., Han, P. K. J., Härter, M., Kinnersley, P., Lloyd, A., Mishra, M., Perestelo-Perez, L., Scholl, I., Tomori, K., Trevena, L., . . . Van Der Weijden, T. (2017). A three-talk model for shared decision making: multistage consultation process. *BMJ*, j4891. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.j4891>
- Coe, J.B., Janke, N., Gray, C. & Serlin, R., 2025 . Clinical communication tools for contextualizing spectrum of care. *Advances in Small Animal Care*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.yasa.2025.06.013>