

GUIDELINES FOR ADMISSION TO THE CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION OF THE EUROPEAN COLLEGE OF VETERINARY NEUROLOGY

(Approved by the Executive Committee, April 2021, revised November 2023)

Fees

A guide to the fees for approval of a Residency Programme and for submission of an applicant's credentials is set annually by the Executive Committee of the ECVN and is published on the ECVN website along with the Examination details.

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1 INTRODUCTION

These guidelines detail the requirements of the applicant, host institution and training programme (Residency Training Programme) for a veterinarian to achieve the entry credentials to sit the certification examination of the European College of Veterinary Neurology (ECVN). An ECVN approved Residency Training Programme is a postgraduate veterinary training of at least three years duration in veterinary neurology and neurosurgery.

2 DEFINITIONS OF APPROVED RESIDENCY TRAINING PROGRAMMES

In order for a veterinarian to achieve the entry credentials to sit the certification examination of the ECVN they must have completed a training programme (Residency) in veterinary neurology approved by the Education Committee of the ECVN.

2.1 Types of Residency Training Programmes:

2.1.1 Standard Residency

This is run in a veterinary faculty, college or referral veterinary clinic with an ECVN approved training programme in veterinary neurology. It takes place under the supervision of an ECVN Diplomate employed and working for at least four days a week within the institution. ACVIM (specialty Neurology) diplomate may act as co-supervisors. However, they cannot be primarily responsible for the training programme. The institution should also employ Diplomates of European Board of Veterinary Specialisation (EVBS), American Board of Veterinary Specialization (ABVS) recognised Colleges or other internationally recognized specialist certification bodies in at least 4 of the following disciplines: Anaesthesia, Emergency and Critical Care, Clinical Pathology, Diagnostic Imaging, Internal Medicine (Companion Animals), Ophthalmology, Pathology and Surgery.

2.1.2 Alternative Residency

This is as for a Standard Residency, but where the number of Diplomates in related disciplines is insufficient to allow recognition as a Standard Residency.

2.2 Duration of the Residency Training Programme

The minimum duration for a Residency Training Programme is three years. Where the veterinarian undertaking an ECVN approved Residency Training Programme is simultaneously also undertaking training leading to other European or American Diploma qualifications or a PhD degree, then the minimum duration of the Residency Programme is increased to 5 years. The Education Committee can allow the residency-training programme to take place on a part time basis as long as the total time is equivalent to at least three year (156 weeks) and does not exceed six years.

2.3 Residency Training Programme Supervisor

The Residency Training Programme must be supervised by an ECVN Diplomate employed and working for at least four days a week within the institution. More than one part-time supervisors can act as a full-time supervisor as long as there is an ECVN Diplomate for every day (five days) of the week available to supervise.

The total number of Residents should not exceed 2 per supervisor (comprising standard and alternative Residents, or a combination thereof not exceeding 2 in total). If more than one part-time supervisors act as a full-time supervisor, the total number of residents remains the same (2). In addition the resident supervisor must have been an ECVN diplomate for at least 2 years

in order to supervise resident training if they are the sole supervisor, or in practice with another diplomate of at least 2 years' standing.

2.4 Institution Hosting the Residency Training Programme

The minimum case load of the Institution hosting the Residency Training Programme must be 250 new neurological cases per year if the Institution has a single Resident, and 150 additional new neurological cases per year per additional Resident.

The Institution should have the appropriate facilities in place to allow the Resident to achieve the training requirements of the Residency Training Programme. If the facilities are judged to be insufficient to meet the training requirements of the Residency Training Programme then the Education Committee may decline to approve the Residency Training Programme or the Education Committee may require that the Resident spend additional time at an institution where the Resident can achieve the training requirements of the Residency Training Programme (ensuring that these additional requirements are met is the responsibility of the Residency Programme Supervisor).

The institutional clinic must maintain complete medical records for each patient and such records must be retrievable.

The institution should also have a 24-hour a day emergency and inpatient care service.

3 RESIDENCY TRAINING PROGRAMME AND POTENTIAL RESIDENT APPROVAL

Both the Residency Training Programme and the applicant must be approved by the Education Committee of the ECVN. The application for approval of the Residency Training Programme and applicant is made in advance of the start date of the Residency Training Programme (to a maximum of six-months prior to the start date of the Residency Training Programme).

Following receipt of the appropriate documents by the Chairperson of the Education Committee, the decision on whether the Residency Training Programme and the applicant have been approved or rejected will be communicated to the Residency Training Programme Supervisor. It is usually expected that the decision will be communicated within 60 days of receipt of the complete documents, but the process may take longer if clarification of details in the Residency Training Programme Registration Form or the Curriculum Vitae of the applicant's required.

The Residency Training Programme can be approved in advance of the selection of the applicant, or an application for approval of the Residency Training Programme and the applicant can be made at the same time.

3.1 Approval of a Residency Training Programme

In order to approve a Residency Training Programme the Residency Training Programme Supervisor must submit (electronically only) a completed and signed ECVN Residency Training Programme Registration Form for each Resident. The ECVN Residency Training Programme Registration Form must be accompanied by proof of payment of the appropriate fee for approval of a Residency Training Programme. A separate fee is required for each Resident.

3.1.1 Deadline for Approval of a Residency Training Programme

Approval of a Residency Training Programme should be sought in advance of the commencement of the programme (to a maximum of six-months prior to the start date of the Residency Programme). The date of approval of the Residency Training Programme shall be

deemed the date of submission of the complete documents, provided these documents are subsequently approved by the Education Committee. If the documents are rejected by the Education Committee then a new approval process must be started.

3.2 Approval of the Applicant

In order for an applicant to be approved for a Residency Training Programme they must have a recognised veterinary degree and have completed a one-year internship or equivalent clinical experience of at least two-year duration (detailed in section 4.1). The Residency Training Programme Supervisor must submit the following documents to the Chairperson of the Education Committee in order for an applicant for a Residency Training Programme to be approved:

- Completed Applicant's Curriculum Vitae Form (not a personal curriculum vitae), signed by the Applicant and the Residency Training Programme Supervisor.

The time limits for approval of Applicants in Standard or Alternative Residency Training Programmes are the same as those for approval of the Residency Training Programmes.

4 APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Applicant requirements prior to starting the Residency Training Programme

Prior to starting the Residency Training Programme, the applicant should have completed a one-year, rotating veterinary internship in medicine and surgery within a university or referral clinic with a substantial case load, or have equivalent broad-based veterinary clinical experience of at least two-years duration. The suitability of the internship programme or clinical experience is assessed by the Residency Training Programme Supervisor at the time of selection of the applicant. Confirmation that the applicant has met the entry criteria for an ECVN approved Residency Training Programme is confirmed by the Residency Training Programme Supervisor, as part of the Applicant's Curriculum Vitae Form.

4.2 Applicant requirements during the Residency Training Programme

All applicants must be members of the European Society of Veterinary Neurology (ESVN) for the entire duration of their Residency Training Programme. Proof of membership of the ESVN for the entire duration of the Residency Training Programme must be included as part of the submission of credentials to sit the certifying examination of the ECVN. If the applicant is not an ESVN member for part, or all, of their Residency Programme then this period of non- membership will not be recognised as part of their Residency Training Programme.

5 THE RESIDENCY TRAINING PROGRAMME

5.1 Objectives

5.1.1 Objective of the Residency Training Programme

The Resident will receive a sound academic and clinical training in veterinary neurology in a suitable clinical environment providing suitable educational opportunities. The primary aim of the Residency Training Programme is to train and educate the applicant in veterinary neurology. However, the applicant should become familiar with medical and surgical entities that may secondarily involve the nervous system or may mimic neurological problems. In addition, the applicant should gain thorough knowledge in basic neurological sciences and should develop skills in order to evaluate the current literature critically.

5.1.2 Objectives for the Resident

The Resident shall develop expertise and clinical proficiency in neurology, as well as a detailed understanding of the related disciplines.

The Resident should learn through experience in clinics, surgery, laboratories, departmental or external elective courses, and professional conferences and seminars.

The expectation is that the Resident should, by the end of the Residency Training Programme, satisfy the credentials required in order to allow entrance to the ECVN examination.

5.2 Description Of The Programme

5.2.1 Residency training

Following completion of the Residency Training Programme, the applicant should:

- Have a broad understanding of internal medicine.
- Have a comprehensive knowledge of neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, neuropathology and neuropharmacology.
- Have a comprehensive knowledge of the principles of anaesthetic management of neurological patients.
- Have a broad knowledge of the principles and interpretation of radiographs and myelograms, CT images, MR images, ultrasound images and scintigraphy.
- Have an in-depth knowledge of the principles and interpretation of biological potential recordings relevant to clinical neurology (for example electromyography and motor, sensory and mixed nerve conduction velocity).
- Given a clinical case with a neurological problem, be able to:
 - Make an anatomical diagnosis.
 - List the probable aetiologic or pathologic diagnoses.
 - List the appropriate tests needed to confirm or refute each of the possible diagnoses.
 - Perform and interpret ancillary diagnostic tests, including CSF collection and analysis, current electrodiagnostic procedures and current imaging modalities.
 - Make a presumptive diagnosis based on the data obtained.
 - Offer a prognosis with and without appropriate treatment.

- Understand the principles and be able to prescribe the appropriate routinely performed surgical and medical treatments for diseases affecting the nervous system.
- Critically review the scientific literature.
- Communicate clearly and effectively with both referring veterinarians and owners of pets.
- Keep clinical case and activity records.

5.2.2 Case load

The number of cases seen by the resident may vary depending on the institution, species and case load. A minimum case load is required within the institution (see previously), but emphasis should be on quality rather than on quantity. Residents should have primary responsibility for their cases. Cases under the care of the resident should be reviewed regularly by Diplomates of the ECVN or ACVIM (Neurology).

Small animal neurology is emphasized, but contact with large animal as well as with comparative neurology should be arranged through clinical rotations or exposure to large animal neurology clinical cases. A two-week (70 hours) rotation in a Large Animal Service with a significant large animal neurology case load AND 5% of the credentials case log (with effect for residencies starting from the 1st of June 2021), OR large animal cases comprising at least 10% of the credentials case log is a requirement for approval of the credentials in order to sit the ECVN examination.

5.2.3 Study and education

Residents will be expected to be knowledgeable of the veterinary neurology literature (current and past), as well as the most relevant human neurology literature in order to manage clinical cases appropriately and to prepare the resident for the ECVN certifying examination.

Attendance and participation in regularly scheduled seminars, case conferences and meetings is required. Over the course of the Residency Training Programme this should comprise the equivalent of a minimum of one hour a week.

It is a requirement that Residents have a suitable period of time free from clinical duty in order to: do library research, pursue clinical investigations, study, take courses or perform externships at other institutions. The minimum period of time free from clinical duty over the course of the Residency Training Programme should be the equivalent of one day per 5-day working week (minimum 9 weeks per year). The Residency Training Programme Supervisor should provide regular feedback to, and evaluation of, the Resident during case rounds, consultations, conferences and research projects.

5.2.4 Clinical Neurology

The Resident must complete a minimum of 75 weeks working in the clinical neurology service of the Institution/s hosting the Residency Training Programme. These weeks should include 50 weeks of direct supervision and up to 25 weeks of indirect supervision.

Direct Supervision: The Residency Training Programme Supervisor must be physically readily available to supervise cases under the care of the Resident. The Residency Training Programme Supervisor retains primary responsibility for the clinic.

Indirect Supervision: The Residency Training Programme Supervisor must be physically readily available to contribute and give advice to the Resident on the management of clinical cases on at least 4 days per week, should the Resident request.

During these periods, the Resident should be exposed to a wide variety of cases reflecting all aspects of veterinary neurology and all levels of complexity. A proportion of the caseload must consist of emergency care of medical and surgical neurological patients. The degree of responsibility assumed by the Resident will be proportional to their expertise and knowledge level and appropriate to the training experience. During the last year of training, the Resident is expected to make primary decisions for most neurology cases.

The Resident will be expected to:

- Consult and communicate with the Residency Training Programme Supervisor and clinical staff: this should remain the principal teaching support.
- Attend seminars and case discussions on neurology and related areas.
- Perform library searches.
- Present cases or case series.
- Attend journal clubs.
- Participate in existing continuing education programs.
- Perform clinical teaching (case supervision, daily rounds, etc.) of interns and/or veterinary students assigned to the Resident's service (where applicable).
- Supervise interns and/or students in the operation of the hospital emergency service.

The Resident will be responsible, along with the Residency Training Programme Supervisor, for receiving clinical appointments, supervising day-to-day care of animals admitted to the hospital, coordinating clinical teaching and providing optimal client service and prompt, professional communications with referring veterinarians.

5.2.5 Basic sciences

The Resident should receive at least 10 hours of complimentary teaching in:

- Neuroanatomy
- Neurophysiology
- Clinical pathology
- Neuropharmacology

Teaching can be arranged in the form of lectures, seminars, practical sessions, or formal training programs.

5.2.6 Neurosurgery

The credentials case log should contain a minimum of 25% of neurosurgically treated patients. The Resident does not have to be the primary surgeon in these cases.

5.2.7 Clinical sciences

The Resident must spend at least **2 weeks (in blocks no smaller than 5 consecutive working days)** in clinical rotations, seminars and case discussion sessions in each of the following areas:

- **Internal Medicine.** The Resident should participate in an Internal Medicine service and become familiar with the most common diseases and problems in the field, as well as with the diagnostic procedures and therapeutic measures applied. Participation in rounds, journal clubs, seminars and conferences is encouraged.

- **Diagnostic Imaging.** The Resident should spend the required amount of time with an experienced Diagnostic Imaging specialist interpreting radiographs, myelograms, CT studies, MR studies, attending seminars and participating and evaluating the results of all diagnostic imaging tests performed.
- **Anaesthesia and/or Emergency and Critical Care.** The Resident should participate in an Anaesthesia and Critical Care service and become familiar with current analgesic protocols, anaesthetic protocols and anaesthetic risks and reduction of these risks, relevant to neurological patients. The Resident should understand the mechanisms of action of current anaesthetic agents, analgesics and sedatives, as well as their effects on the nervous system.

In addition, the resident must spend at least **1 week (in one block)** in clinical rotations, seminars, rounds and case discussion sessions in each of the following areas:

- **General pathology.** The Resident should participate in rounds and regular review sessions of general pathological samples, with the emphasis on neuropathology, under the supervision of a pathologist. Attendance of courses, lectures, seminars and other formative sessions is also recommended. Exclusively clinical pathology rotations are not acceptable.
- **Ophthalmology.** The resident should participate in an ophthalmology service and acquire a basic knowledge of common ophthalmic problems and an in-depth knowledge of neuro-ophthalmic problems and diseases.

6 REQUIRED PUBLICATIONS

During the residency, residents are required to demonstrate that they have contributed to research within the field of neurology. In order to facilitate this, the resident should write, submit and provide proof of publication or full acceptance for publication of two articles pertaining to clinical veterinary neurology or the field of neuroscience as first author in a peer-reviewed scientific journal publishing in the English language. The first publication must be a prospective or retrospective scientific study or original laboratory-based research study in neuroscience with a minimum impact factor of 0.5. The second publication can be either a case report or a retrospective or prospective scientific study in a peer-reviewed scientific journal publishing in the English language (a minimum impact factor for this second publication is not required). Systematic reviews are not suitable publications for either category. Both manuscripts must be accepted for publication without further amendment (In Press) or published in order to have the credentials accepted. If the resident has completed a PhD or other research with a focus on neuroscience or neurology, any manuscript published within 2 years of the commencement of the residency related to this work may be considered eligible, based on the decision of the credential committee.

Publications with acceptance pending minor changes will be provisionally accepted at the time of submission of the credentials file, provided proof of full acceptance without further amendment is received by the Chairperson of the Credential Committee before the next deadline for notification of the Chairperson of the Examination Committee of intention to sit an examination session. Publications with acceptance pending major changes will not be accepted. If full acceptance is not received by this deadline then the credentials will be considered as not accepted and the applicant will need to resubmit the entire credentials file.

7 PROGRESS EVALUATION OF THE RESIDENCY TRAINING PROGRAMME

7.1 Evaluation by the Residency Training Programme Supervisor

Regular and formal reviews should be performed every six months: the Resident should meet with Residency Training Programme Supervisor and have their progress reviewed, critiqued and planned. These reviews should be recorded by the Residency Training Programme Supervisor and be available to the Education Committee if requested.

7.2 Annual Evaluation by the Education Committee

A completed Annual Report Form, signed by both the resident and Residency Training Programme Supervisor, must be submitted for evaluation and approval by the Education Committee at the end of each year of the Residency Training Programme. Annual Report for part-time training should be submitted after each block of 52 weeks has been completed.

Accepted file formats include PDF and Word files that include the relevant signatures and must be submitted from the Supervisor's e-mail address to the Chairperson of the Education Committee. Paper copies are no longer accepted. The deadline for submitting the Annual Report Form is not later than 3 months after the end of the Residency year to which the forms pertain. If the Annual Report Form is not submitted by the deadline or is not approved, then the Education Committee may request remedial action, including increasing the minimum duration of the Residency Training Programme.

The Resident will be notified about the decision of the Education Committee regarding their Annual Report Form, and any required remedial action (if applicable), within 60 days of the date of receipt of the forms.

8 SUBMISSION OF CREDENTIALS TO SIT THE CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION OF THE ECVN

Credentials can be submitted before the end of the residency, as long as the residency programme ends in the same year as the year of credential submission.

Candidates must pass the examination within 8 years of completing the residency, irrespective of when they submitted their credential file (for residents starting after January 2022). The maximum time period from the start of an approved Residency Training Programme to submission of the applicant's credential file is 8-years for candidates that started before January 2022.

Credential files should be emailed to the Chairperson of the Credential Committee.

8.1 Payment

The credentials submission fee is set annually by the Executive Committee of the ECVN and is published on the ECVN website along with the Examination details. This fee should be paid prior to submission of the credential file and confirmation of payment must be included in the submitted credential file.

8.2 Application deadline

The complete credentials file must be received by the Chairperson of the Credential Committee before the submission deadline of the 1st September for those who wish to sit the exam the following February.

8.3 Credentials file content (electronic format only)

The credentials file must include

- Completed and signed Applicant's Curriculum Vitae Form (CV Form on website).
- An Education Programme Form signed by the Residency Programme Supervisor (Education Programme Form on website).
- A signed evaluation by the Residency Programme Supervisor of the level of training and knowledge reached by the Resident and whether the Resident has fulfilled the training criteria of the Residency Guidelines (supervisor statement form on website).
- A case log of exactly 200 cases, presented in a condensed (3 to 4 cases per page) tabular form and landscape (see Case Log Form on website). At least 25% (n=50) of the cases must be neurosurgically managed cases.
- Where the requirements for exposure to large animal neurology are met through completing a two-week (70 hours) rotation in a Large Animal Service with a substantial large animal neurology case load, then at least 5% (10 large animal cases) must be included in the case log and the credential file must include a scanned original signed letter from the Supervisor of this rotation (for residencies starting after June 2021). The rotation supervisor must be a Diplomate of a European Board of Veterinary Specialisation (EVBS) or American Board of Veterinary Specialization (ABVS) recognised College in Neurology, Equine Medicine or Surgery or Production Animal Medicine or Surgery.
- Scanned original signed letter(s) from Diplomates of European Board of Veterinary Specialisation (EVBS) or American Board of Veterinary Specialization (ABVS) recognised Colleges, or full University Professors, within those respective disciplines. The letters should certify that the Resident has undertaken the required period of training within those disciplines:
 - a) Internal Medicine
 - b) Diagnostic Imaging
 - c) Anaesthesia and/or Critical Care
 - d) General Pathology
 - e) Ophthalmology
- Evidence of publication (please send the PDFs of the publications) or full acceptance of publication of two first author publications pertaining to veterinary neurology. For publications in press, the credentials file should include a copy of the final accepted manuscript and figures.
- Evidence of payment of the credentials file submission fee.
- Evidence of membership of ESVN from the beginning of the Residency Training Programme up to the year of the examination.
- Contact email and address for the Resident, preferably the Resident's normal place of work.

Please submit all documents as **PDF files** (or if this is not possible then as Microsoft Word documents) by email to the **Chairperson of the Credential Committee** (credecom@ecvn.org).

8.4 Follow-up

The applicant will normally be notified by email of file receipt within 2 weeks. If the applicant has not received email confirmation within this timeframe, then it is the responsibility of the applicant to contact the Chairperson of the Credential Committee to confirm receipt of the credential file.

Complete files received prior to the submission deadline will be reviewed by the Credential Committee and a decision on acceptance of the credentials file will be made on the basis of whether the credential file meets the guidelines for admission to the certification examination of the ECVN as detailed in this document and the Constitution and Bye Laws of the College.

The applicant will be notified about the decision of the Credential Committee regarding their credentials file by 1st November of the same year of Credential Submission. The Committee may decide to:

1. Accept the applicant's credential file.
2. Defer making a decision on the applicant's credential file subject to clarification of perceived deficiencies in the credential file. In this case the Chairperson of the Credential Committee will ask the applicant to clarify queries from the Credential Committee before making a decision on whether to accept or reject the applicant's credential file.
3. Reject the applicant's credential file. If the applicant's credential file is rejected then the Credential Committee may make recommendations to the applicant on how the applicant's credential file may be improved.

The Chairperson of the Credential Committee will inform the Chairperson of the Examination Committee about which applicants have had their credentials files accepted and are therefore eligible to sit the certifying examination of the ECVN.

9 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Members of the Credential Committee that have been directly involved in the education of a applicant should withdraw from the decision process for that particular applicant. If a member of the Credential Committee feels for any other reason that their contribution to the decision process for a particular applicant may represent a conflict of interest, then they should inform the Chairperson of the Credential Committee. If a majority decision cannot be made about a particular applicant's credentials file, then the Chairperson of the Credential Committee may ask an additional Diplomat of the ECVN to participate in the decision-making process.

10 APPEALS PROCESS

Adverse decisions by the Education/ Credential Committee include, but are not limited to:

- (a) non-approval of a Residency Training Programme.
- (b) Rejection of an individual's credentials.

Following an adverse decision by the Education/Credential Committee pertaining to non-approval of a Residency Training Programme or rejection of an individual's credentials then an appeal against the decision can be made to the Secretary of the ECVN. In the event of non-approval of a Residency Training Programme, this appeal must be made by the named Residency Training Programme Supervisor. In the event of rejection of an individual's credentials, this appeal must be made by the resident themselves.

Requests for appeal must be made in writing to the Secretary of the ECVN within 60 days of the postmarked date or email date of their notification and shall include a statement of the

grounds for reconsideration and documentation in support of the petition. The ECVN Secretary shall notify the President of the College and the Chairperson of the Education/Credential Committee. The President shall appoint a committee of three Diplomates who are neither Officers nor members of the Education/Credential Committee to serve as an Appeals Committee, indicating the reason(s) for rejecting the applicant. The complete dossier of the applicant will be provided for the Appeals Committee to review. The Appeals process should be completed within 3 months.

11 EXAMINATION

The exam dates will be usually in February. The specific dates in February will be announced in June of the previous year. Accepted applicants must sit the examination within five years of being notified that they have satisfied the credentials process. The applicant may sit the examination on four (4) occasions only. Applicants are required to inform the Examination Committee chairperson of their intention to sit an examination session before the **15th of November of the previous year** to the examination.