



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Veterinary Nursing: Care of the Terminally Ill Patient

Unit code: H0Y9 34

Superclass: SN

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Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to develop knowledge and understanding of the needs of terminally ill patients and their owners following diagnosis of an animal's condition. Through completion of the Unit, candidates will develop knowledge which enables them to work effectively with owners and members of the practice team in making the end of an animal's life as pain free and comfortable as possible.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

- 1 Describe common medical conditions associated with the terminally ill companion animal.
- 2 Summarise the effective nursing requirements of terminally ill companion animal patients.
- 3 Explain companion animal death and its effects on humans.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

Candidates should have achieved a credit level pass in Standard Grade Biology or equivalent and should have a good knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of healthy animals. In addition, candidates should have good communication skills and should have experience in communicating with people in difficult situations, such as those encountered in the practice placement.

Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

General information (cont)

Core Skills

There are opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Communication* and the Critical Thinking component of *Problem Solving* at level 6 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

Context for delivery

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes. It is included in the framework of the HND in Veterinary Nursing.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

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The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, Knowledge and/or Skills, and Evidence Requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Describe common medical conditions associated with the terminally ill companion animal.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Terminology associated with terminal illness in companion animal patients.
- ◆ Conditions associated with organ failure of the heart, liver and kidneys.
- ◆ Dementia in the companion animal patient.
- ◆ Malignant conditions of terminally ill companion animals.

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ describe the terminal conditions affecting two companion animals, including one with organ failure or apparent dementia and one with a malignant condition.

Outcome 2

Summarise the effective nursing requirements of terminally ill companion animal patients.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Veterinary nursing skills necessary to support palliative care in companion animal patients with organ failure, dementia and malignant disease.
- ◆ Effective communication with the owner regarding terminal illness treatment support.
- ◆ The importance of owner compliance in support of the animal's treatment.
- ◆ Care of the owner and patient as the end of the animal patient's life approaches.

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ summarise the effective nursing requirements of two companion animals, including one with organ failure or apparent dementia and one with a malignant condition.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Veterinary Nursing: Care of the Terminally Ill Patient

Outcome 3

Explain companion animal death and its effects on humans.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Reasons for animal euthanasia.
- ◆ Informed consent.
- ◆ The process of euthanasia in animals.
- ◆ Disposal methods available following euthanasia.
- ◆ Effects of sudden animal death on owners and veterinary practice personnel.
- ◆ The grieving process.

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ explain the process of euthanasia in one companion animal making reference to:
 - reasons for euthanasia
 - informed consent
 - procedure
 - disposal
- ◆ describe the effects of euthanasia of one companion animal on the owner and veterinary practice personnel.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Veterinary Nursing: Care of the Terminally Ill Patient

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This Unit is designed to provide knowledge of the illnesses and conditions that may result in an animal being diagnosed as terminally ill and the nursing skills that become necessary in order to support the animal and its owner through the time leading up to the end of its life. The process and implications of euthanasia are considered and case studies encompassing the Outcomes for this Unit evaluated.

Although this Unit may be taken on a stand-alone basis by candidates in employment wishing to develop and/or enhance their skills, it is primarily intended for candidates who are studying towards the HNC/D in Veterinary Nursing and the teaching and learning should be delivered in this context.

Outcome 1

This Outcome develops an understanding of the medical conditions that may result in an animal being diagnosed as terminally ill and introduces the terminology with which the candidate must become familiar, initially through an understanding of basic terms such as the difference between acute, chronic and terminal and then the specific terminology that relates to organ failure of the heart, liver, kidneys, psychological diseases and malignant disease. For this Unit it would be preferable to focus on terminal illnesses using the dog and cat as examples, but for assessment purposes, the scenario-based case studies may contain information relating to any small companion animal species.

Outcome 2

This Outcome allows the candidate to consider owner involvement in the animal's treatment and their own role in encouraging compliance with treatment in the home and communication techniques to encourage this at a time when the owner is undoubtedly under a significant amount of stress. The importance of written instructions and sympathetic and supportive dealings with the owner can be enhanced through class discussion of fictional case studies that enable the candidates to explore key factors.

The Outcome, through greater understanding of the medical conditions affecting terminally ill patients, enables the candidate to consider their own contribution towards the effective nursing of these patients.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Veterinary Nursing: Care of the Terminally Ill Patient

Outcome 3

Through completion of this Outcome candidates should be able to explain the process of euthanasia in a range of species and also the importance of the process being undertaken in a smooth, professional and compassionate manner. The human element of an animal being euthanised must be fully understood through class discussion and case studies. The reasons for euthanasia must be understood (terminally sick animal; severe injuries; death of the owner; owner terminally ill; change in circumstances; unwanted; behavioural problems; working animal no longer able to work; death imposed by law.) This is also the ideal opportunity to discuss the incidence of naturally occurring, perhaps more sudden, deaths such as those caused by sudden illness or road traffic accidents.

This Outcome is also an opportunity to look at the grieving process from animals' points of view whereby animals have lost their own human or animal companions through death or euthanasia. The effects of animal euthanasia on staff in the practice should also be discussed and evaluated.

Guidance on the delivery of this Unit

Whilst this Unit may be delivered on a stand-alone basis, it has been designed as part of the HNC/HND in Veterinary Nursing. It is recommended that candidates are familiar with communication issues and this may be developed through their experiences in dealing with people during their work placement and through completion of the SCQF Level 7 Unit *Veterinary Nursing: Client Relations*.

Delivery could involve lectures and class discussions within the college environment supported by workplace experience of animals with terminal conditions and animals that have to be euthanased. The delivery could also include the use of case studies, staff and candidate experience and the use of DVD.

Guidance on the assessment of this Unit

Outcomes 1 and 2 could be assessed jointly using two case studies whereby candidates describe the terminal illnesses most commonly associated with animal patients and summarise their nursing requirements. Outcome 3 could be integrated into the previous assessment provided one of the animal patients subsequently requires euthanasia.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Veterinary Nursing: Care of the Terminally Ill Patient

Assessment Guidelines

Outcome 1

The assessment of this Outcome can be combined with Outcomes 2 and 3, details of which are given under Outcome 3.

Outcome 2

The assessment of this Outcome can be combined with Outcomes 1 and 3, details of which are given under Outcome 3.

Outcome 3

The assessment of this Outcome can be combined with Outcomes 1 and 2 and could consist of an unseen test conducted in supervised conditions and lasting two hours. The test could involve two scenario-based case studies distributed to candidates prior to the assessment event. One case study should involve a companion animal with organ failure or apparent dementia and the other should have a malignant condition: one of the two cases must require euthanasia.

Online and Distance Learning

If this Unit is delivered by open or distance learning methods, additional resources will be required for candidate support, assessment and quality assurance. For further information and advice, please refer to the SQA guide: *Assessment and Quality Assurance for Open and Distance Learning* (www.sqa.org.uk).

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

There may be opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Communication* and the *Critical Thinking* component of *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills Components.

The case studies for Outcomes 1–3 may provide the opportunity to develop the written component of the Core Skill of *Communication* at SCQF level 6. Alternatively, if this response is presented orally this may provide the opportunity to develop the oral component of the Core Skill of *Communication*. Whatever the nature of the case studies, opportunities will exist for developing Critical Thinking skills at level 6.

Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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General information for candidates

Unit title: Veterinary Nursing: Care of the Terminally Ill Patient

This Unit is designed to provide you with knowledge of the nursing care of terminally ill companion animal patients and the interaction during this time with the patient, the owners and practice personnel. The Unit should enhance your knowledge of the illnesses that may become terminal and you will learn the terminology relating to these illnesses and how these illnesses affect the patient. As this type of illness frequently results in the death of the patient, often through euthanasia, this Unit also discusses the process of euthanasia and how this is undertaken in practice. The effects of euthanasia or sudden animal death on the owner, other companion animals at home and on practice staff are also considered.

It would be beneficial, but not essential, for you to have successfully achieved the level 7 Unit *Veterinary Nursing: Client Relations* before starting this Unit.

This Unit is ideally placed within the HNC/D Veterinary Nursing and is relevant for those who work in the veterinary or allied industries.

The Unit comprises three Outcomes:

Outcome 1

This Outcome develops an understanding of the medical conditions that may result in an animal being diagnosed as terminally ill and introduces the terminology with which you must become familiar, initially through an understanding of basic terms such as the difference between acute, chronic and terminal illness and then the specific terminology that relates to organ failure of the heart, liver, kidneys, psychological diseases and malignant disease.

Outcome 2

This Outcome allows you to consider owner involvement in the animal's treatment, your own role in encouraging compliance with treatment in the home and communication techniques to encourage this at a time when the owner is undoubtedly under a significant amount of stress. The importance of written instructions and sympathetic and supportive dealings with the owner will be explored using case studies. This Outcome also highlights your role in terms of supporting the treatment of the terminally ill patient.

Outcome 3

Through completion of this Outcome you should be able to explain the process of euthanasia in a range of species and also the importance of the process being undertaken in a smooth, professional, compassionate manner. You should understand fully the reasons for euthanasia and the effects of animal death on owners and veterinary practice staff. This Outcome also provides an opportunity to look at the grieving process in animals that have lost their own human or animal companions through death.

In order to complete this Unit successfully you will be required to achieve a satisfactory level of achievement in a two hour unseen test involving two case studies.