

## REGISTERED VETERINARY TECHNICIAN EXAMINATION TRANSITION QUESTIONS

The Registered Veterinary Technician Committee (RVTC) is researching the possibility of transitioning to the Veterinary Technician National Examination (VTNE) and several questions have been raised. RVTC contracted with the Office of Professional Examination Services (OPES) to conduct an evaluation of the VTNE to determine if it is acceptable for California licensure. OPES conducted the evaluation in two workshops comprised of Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) and Veterinarian subject matter experts (SMEs) and presented the VTNE evaluation report (Report) to RVTC in July 2010. Following are the responses to those questions and issues:

### Question

1. Does RVTC need to develop a California supplemental exam to address the California-specific job tasks?

### Answer

Report recommendation: If RVTC accepts the VTNE for California licensure, a California supplemental exam would be required to address California laws and regulations related to the practice of a California RVT.

*A supplemental licensure exam is a required exam that supplements or completes the content area or scope of practice of the primary exam. The current California RVT licensure exam addresses the competencies, laws, and regulations related to a California RVT. The VTNE does not address California specific laws and regulations; therefore a supplemental exam would be required to address these areas.*

Implementation of an RVT supplemental California law and regulations exam will ensure that candidates will be examined on the RVT-related California law, regulations, and specific tasks cited in the law.

### Question

2. The VTNE does not include questions for specific tasks that are not allowed in all jurisdictions where the VTNE is administered. Since RVTs in some other states and Canada are not allowed to perform the California job tasks, e.g., extract teeth, suture, induce anesthesia, create relief holes, apply casts or splints, or perform certain emergency procedures when a veterinarian is not present, these types of questions would not be included on the VTNE. Is that a problem?

### Answer

Report results: The SMEs from both workshop groups determined that the exam plan content areas and weightings from the VTNE and the California RVT exam were sufficiently the same, with the exception of the content cited in California law and regulations.

Implementation of an RVT supplemental California law and regulations exam will ensure that candidates will be examined on the RVT-related California law, regulations, and specific tasks cited in the law. For example, four out of five tasks mentioned in the question above are cited in the California Business and Professions (B&P) Code, which would be included in the supplemental California law and regulations exam. As stated in B&P Code section 2036:

*(b) An R.V.T. may perform the following procedures only under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian and when done so pursuant to the direct order, control and full professional responsibility of the licensed veterinarian:*

- (1) Anesthesia induction by inhalation or intravenous injection;*
- (2) Application of casts and splints;*
- (3) Dental extraction;*
- (4) Suturing of existing skin incisions.*

#### Question

3. If needed, who would create and administer the California supplement? If it does include the RVT job tasks, do we (California) create the exam ourselves? This would require item writing, reviewing, and Angoff workshops, workshops to put the exam together, as well as periodic practice analysis, which would cost almost or just as much as creating the entire exam we do now. If the purpose of transitioning to the VTNE is to save money, having to do workshops removes that justification. And, if the supplement is administered on computer, will it be at the same sites and time as the VTNE, or will candidates have to go to two different sites at two different times? Certainly, having to take two exams, especially if they are given at different times and locations, will increase the cost, inconvenience and anxiety for California candidates.

#### Answer

RVTC may contract with OPES to develop the supplemental California law and regulations exam. Best practice for an exam development cycle includes the development of an exam plan, item writing, item review, exam construction and setting the passing score. Even though this cycle is the same as the current exam development cycle, there are significant cost savings in developing a supplemental exam plan instead of a competency occupational analysis and by combining the exam construction workshop with the passing score workshop if the number of items on a test is 100 or less.

The VTNE is administered by Prometric at testing centers throughout the US and Canada as a computer-based exam given in three testing windows each year. The current RVT exam is administered by PSI at 13 testing centers throughout California, also as a computer-based exam. The supplemental California law and regulations exam could be administered at the same California PSI testing centers and RVTC could contract with PSI for additional ten nationwide testing centers at no cost.

Several boards within DCA have licensure candidates who take a national exam and a supplemental California exam at different test centers.

#### Question

4. Since Canada does not use the English math system anymore, are there no questions on the VTNE regarding conversions from the English system to metric, and if not, is that a problem?

#### Answer

No, it should not be a problem. One of the goals during both the workshops was to determine if the VTNE exam covered the same content as the California RVT examination.

Report results: For this purpose, the SMEs were given the California RVT exam plan and asked to link each California task to a VTNE exam plan task and knowledge that covered the same content. The SMEs from both workshops were able to link each California task to a task and knowledge on the VTNE exam plan with the exception of those pertaining to California law and regulations. California tasks related to math were included in this linkage.

It is a candidate's responsibility to have sufficient knowledge of all tasks and knowledge cited in the exam plan at the minimum acceptable competence level.

#### Question

5. One of the determinations made by the SMEs during the two validation workshops was that, in addition to the VTNE, California should require a law and jurisprudence exam. It was not made clear whether this would be a take-home exam like it is for veterinarians, or given on computer.

#### Answer

Report recommendation: If RVTTC accepts the VTNE for California licensure, a California supplemental exam would be required to address the California laws and regulations related to the practice of a California RVT.

The intent of the recommendation to implement a supplemental exam was to develop a *licensure* exam. This *licensure* exam is intended to be a secure exam with pass/fail consequences to licensure. The SMEs expected any implementation of a supplemental exam to be treated the same as the current California RVT exam, being of a secure type and administered by computer. The SMEs wanted evidence of candidate proficiency in California law, regulations, and specific tasks cited in the law. A take-home exam would be considered an education tool, not a licensure exam. Therefore, based on the evaluation results, OPES cannot endorse implementing a take-home or educational exam.

#### Question

6. There were some concerns about whether the law exam, if it contained questions about the RVT job tasks, could be a take-home exam.

#### Answer

See the response to question #5. The intent of the recommendation from the evaluation was to implement a secure and computer-based licensure exam with licensure consequences. A take-home exam would be considered an educational tool which was not the intent of the SMEs.

#### Question

7. If the California supplement is only jurisprudence, how do we justify stating that RVTs in California have been trained and *tested* in the RVT restricted tasks if they are not included on the exam? How would we know if an RVT is really minimally competent to induce anesthesia, suture, etc., if they are not tested in these areas? How would we justify stating that an RVT is different from an unregistered assistant if we have no test questions on the tasks that only RVTs may perform? And how can OPES state the VTNE is sufficient (except for jurisprudence) if it does not include the most important, high-risk job tasks RVTs perform?

#### Answer

Taking a licensure exam provides an assessment of a candidate's *overall* level of knowledge related to specified content areas. To pass a licensure exam, a candidate must get a total number of questions correct across content areas that would represent the minimally acceptable competence (MAC) level, determined by SMEs. Passing an exam is not proof that the candidate has sufficient knowledge on each and every topic, but evidence that the candidate has sufficient *overall* knowledge equal to the MAC.

Each form of an exam will not have a question on everything that a licensee is licensed to perform. Any given form of an exam is only a sampling of questions selected to meet the percentage or weight requirements of the current exam plan. Therefore, on any exam form, some task/knowledge may not be tested.

If a supplemental California law and regulations exam is implemented, the exam plan will be developed by SMEs selecting RVT-related California law, regulations, and specific tasks cited in the law.

If RVTC wants to ensure that each candidate has the skill and ability, above the knowledge, to perform identified tasks, then a practical exam of each of these tasks should be implemented.

Finally, the differences between RVTs and unregistered assistants are delineated by the requirements for registration, e.g., education, eligibility, and licensing requirements.

#### Question

8. What input would California have on the committee in charge of the VTNE, since we would be supplying the second largest group of candidates for the VTNE after Canada? It appears that Canada has a dedicated seat on that committee.

#### Answer

The representatives on the VTNE committees are volunteers, so California could ask for persons to volunteer to sit on the committee, but appointments to the committee are based on availability whether or not someone volunteers to participate, and the Board has no control over a person's desire to participate.

#### Question

9. In the past, OPES has stated that it is inappropriate for RVT educators, especially program directors, to participate in exam preparation. OPES will not even allow members of RVTC to participate in its workshops because they believe that constitutes some sort of conflict of interest. However, most of the people in charge of the test preparation for the VTNE are RVT program directors or instructors. I believe Dr. Hollingshead himself is an RVT educator, so why is that not a problem?

#### Answer

OPES is finalizing its DCA policy regarding restrictions for Board and Committee members, educators, and instructors participating as SMEs in State licensure exam development. OPES cannot enforce its policy on members of national committees.

#### Summary

RVTC contracted with OPES to conduct an evaluation of the VTNE. The purpose of this evaluation was to determine if the VTNE would be acceptable as the RVT competency exam for California licensure. This evaluation was conducted by OPES with two SME workshops on March 25-26, 2010, and April 29-30, 2010. The SMEs evaluated the VTNE to determine if it meets professional psychometric standards and content acceptable for California licensure.

The evaluation results state the VTNE does meet professional psychometric standards and content acceptable for California licensure with the exception of California-specific law and regulations.

The SMEs from both workshops were unanimous in their recommendation that RVTC may accept the VTNE for California licensure, only under the stipulation that a supplemental exam of RVT-related California law and regulation be administered to each candidate for licensure. This supplemental exam would ensure that the California-specific tasks cited in the law could be tested.

It was the intent of the SMEs that the supplemental exam follow the same licensure criteria and consequences (i.e. secure, computer-based, pass/fail results) as the current

California RVT exam. Therefore, the implementation of a take-home exam, which would be considered an educational tool instead of a test of knowledge, would not be in compliance with the recommendation from the evaluation.