

VETSKILL
END POINT ASSESSMENT
ORGANISATION
APPROVALS COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 2023

Farriers Registration Council



Established under the
Farriers (Registration) Act 1975

Report of the Approvals Committee appointed by the Farriers Registration Council
Established under the Farriers (Registration) Act 1975, as amended

**FARRIERS REGISTRATION COUNCIL APPROVALS COMMITTEE:
VETSKILL END POINT ASSESSMENT ORGANISATION NOVEMBER 2023**

Background

1. The Farriers Registration Council (FRC) is charged under Section 11 (1) (a) and (b) of the Farriers (Registration) Act 1975 (FRA) as amended with approval of any course of training which it considers is designed to confer on persons completing it sufficient knowledge and skill for carrying out the shoeing of horses, and, any qualification which, as the result of an examination taken in conjunction with a course of training approved by the Council under this section, is granted to candidates reaching a standard at the examination indicating, in the opinion of the Council, that they have sufficient knowledge and skill to carry out the shoeing of horses. The Approvals Committee (AC) – a delegated committee of the Council – has been established in order to provide assurance to the FRC of those matters set out in Section 11 of the Act.
2. The AC consisted of Martin Peaty, veterinary surgeon, Sarah Hamlyn, educationalist, and Stephen Newman, farrier.
3. VetSkill has applied to become the End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) for the Farrier Standard ST0172. The End Point Assessment (EPA) is a qualification which enables an apprentice to become a registered farrier and must therefore be approved under Section 11 of the FRA.
4. The Farriery Standard is available on the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (IfATE) website:
<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/farrier-v1-1>
5. The Assessment Plan for the Farriery Standard is also available on the IfATE website:
https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/media/3269/st0172_farrier_l3_ap_for_publication_03072019.pdf
6. Until May 2023 farrier apprenticeships had been delivered in accordance with the LANTRA National Occupational Standard for Farriery, NVQ Level 3, with the Diploma of the Worshipful Company of Farriers (DipWCF), the syllabus for which was published on the WCF website, recognised as a technical certificate by OFQUAL. From 6 October 2023 the Worshipful Company of Farriers (WCF) is no longer approved by the FRC. There are a small number of apprentices who were due to have a last re-take opportunity on the old framework in November 2023. Notable differences between the old framework and the new Farriery Standard, ST0172, include the inclusion of behaviours as well as knowledge and skills in the latter. Tool making was included in the old framework but is not in the new standard, and business and IT skills, and trimming for an unshod horse have been added to the new standard. Provision for the remaining apprentices who have yet to successfully complete the old framework is required.
7. The EPA must be delivered by an independent end-point assessment organisation with no affiliation to the employers or training providers involved in delivering the apprenticeship. All end-point assessment providers must be approved by DfE/Ofqual before being added to the Apprenticeship Provider and Assessment Register (APAR). VetSkill are currently registered for six (6) animal care related standards:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/finding-an-end-point-assessment-organisation>

8. It is intended that apprentices successful in the EPA may use the post nominals QFS (Qualified to Farrier Standard).

Governance

9. VetSkill is a private company registration number 03127119. Details of directors and financial statements can be found on the Company House website at:
<https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/03127119>
10. The Board of Directors is chaired by Gregory L Warman who is also the Responsible / Accountable Officer dealing with the organisation's current regulators including Ofqual.
11. AC met remotely with VetSkill board member and Director of Operations Sam Double MSc, BSc, DipAVN (Med), RVN, VTS (Anaesthesia and Analgesia), CertEd, GMBPsS who will oversee the farriery EPA delivery and quality assurance.
12. Katherine Kissick MA Ed, RVN, CertEd, former Head of Farriery at Myerscough College, will be helping to co-ordinate assessment writing and quality assurance.
13. VetSkill have in house employed EPA, Standards and Quality Assurance Teams to provide EPAs for Veterinary Nursing, Veterinary Technician, Equine Groom, Senior Equine Groom, Animal Care and Welfare Assistant and Dog Groomer standards.
14. Clear lines of responsibility were outlined to the AC in diagrammatic form and confirmed during discussions.
15. VetSkill are familiar with the regulated environment and work with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons in relation to the EPA for veterinary nurses, Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in relation to a microchipping register and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) in relation to the holding of a Suitably Qualified Persons Register and accreditation of SQP qualifications. VetSkill received approval from OFQUAL for delivery of the farriery standard EPA on 30 November 2023.
16. The AC were provided with the following policies which appeared to be thorough and up to date:
 - Adverse Effects Policy
 - Complaints Policy
 - Enquiries and Appeals Policy
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
 - Maladministration and Malpractice Policy
 - Plagiarism, Cheating and Collusion Policy
 - Reasonable Adjustments Policy
 - Record Management Policy
 - Special Consideration Policy
 - Health and Safety Policy
 - Conflicts of Interest Policy and Guidance
17. VetSkill actively manage and avoid conflicts of interest in their assessors. Candidates' names and the colleges they are from are circulated to Independent End Point Assessors (IEPAs) / examiners in advance of assessments. IEPAs are required to sign a declaration that they have no conflicts of interest and that they will notify VetSkill should one arise.
18. The AC was provided with financial statement including profit and loss accounts and balance sheets for 2021 and 2022. Turnover has grown from £1,639,712 in 2021 to £1,952,156 in 2022 but operating profit was documented to have decreased from £370,217 to £102,788. The

balance sheets showed net assets of £175,480 in 2021 and £137,918 in 2022. In 2022 reserves were 7.1% of annual turnover. There is no formal reserves policy.

19. VetSkill continued to carry out assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have a core of 30 employed staff members but the majority, currently over 200, are on zero hours contracts or self-employed contractors. In the event that there was business interruption, such as a temporary cessation of assessments due to another pandemic, this business model would provide the business with some resilience.
20. VetSkill uses ACE360 as its apprenticeship management system. The software is used to securely store evidence and communicate with the Apprenticeship Service. It is penetration tested annually and vulnerability scans are undertaken weekly. It is backed up to servers in two secure UK locations.

Information for Stakeholders

21. A draft Apprentice Guide for Level 3 Farriery Standard ST1072 has been prepared and outlines the EPA Journey. It explains the Gateway and details each of the four assessment methods including the Written Test, Professional Discussion and the two Practical Assessments, the Unshod Trim and Shoeing Test. There are sections on Preparing for Your EPA, Instructions and Conduct and on Marking and Appeals.
22. A Detailed Appendix A to the Apprentice Guide Outlines all the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours to be assessed and details in which part of the EPA the assessment will take place; i.e., the Written Test, Professional Discussion, Practical Assessment – Unshod Trim or Practical Assessment – Shoeing Test.
23. The draft would benefit from some edits:
 - a. The paragraph “Farriers Registrations Council” states that all persons who shoe horses are required to be registered and needs to clarify that there is an exception for veterinary surgeons.
 - b. The last paragraph of the “Farriers Registration Council” paragraph refers to the Farriery Standard ST0172 and a link to the Standard might be considered.
 - c. The “Your EPA Journey” flowchart states that a minimum of 12 months of training must be completed before the Gateway to the EPA is completed. Twelve months is the minimum required to draw down funding and it might be useful to outline that 42 month of training is usual; this was extracted from the assessment plan and shall require modification by IfATE.
 - d. The “About Your Assessments” section under Assessment Method 1: Written Test states the time will be “180 minutes (Maximum)” but this might not be the maximum if extra time is granted as a reasonable adjustment; this was extracted from the assessment plan produced by IfATE.
 - e. The last paragraph of the Assessment Method 1: Written Test is missing the table outlining the areas which might be included. It is stated that this will be available after May 2024 but will in any event be provided before the first EPA in order to be consistent to candidates in the first and subsequent iterations.
 - f. Reference to “unshod” in Assessment Method 4: Practical Assessment – Shoeing Test should be to “shod”. This is as set out in the assessment plan and shall require amendment by IfATE.
 - g. Appendix A Knowledge Skill and Behaviours (KSB) Assessed during the Practical Assessment – Unshod Trim under S7 refers to preparing the horse for shod finish,

choosing the correct shoe and to nailing or affixing the shoe in an appropriate and safe manner. This is as set out in the assessment plan and shall require amendment by IfATE

24. A draft Employer and Training Provider Guide for Level 3 Farriery Standard ST0172 has been prepared for the employer / Approved Training Farriers (ATFs) and the training providers / Colleges respectively.
25. The draft would benefit from some of the same edits as the Apprentice Guide and in addition:
 - a. In paragraph 9.4 “A suitable steel for the task step” should be replaced by “Suitable steel for the task set”
 - b. Appendix A table refers to ST0943 in the top and third rows instead of ST0172.
26. An Assessors Handbook will also be prepared.

Assessment Method 1: Written Test

27. The Farriery Standard ST0172 states that this may be paper based or computer based.
28. The Training Providers / Colleges have confirmed that the apprentices who have completed the Gateway are expecting and have been prepared for a paper-based test. That is the proposed test format for the first iteration of the EPA.
29. Reasonable adjustments will align with the candidate’s normal way of working as outlined in the Reasonable Adjustments Policy so there will be the ability for the use of computers / word processors following a successful application from the Trainin Provider.
30. Thereafter VetSkill have indicated they would migrate to a computer-based format.
31. This would be using the Cirrus assessment platform which is securely hosted in accordance with International Standards Organization (ISO) requirements.
32. The test format is outlined in the AP and will be 6 questions mapped against the KSBs which will include long structured answers, short structured answers, graphical or diagrammatic questions and questions based on a scenario or case study.
33. The AP will be the blueprint for the questions. Question packs will be produced by VetSkill and these will be randomly allocated. There will be a record of the questions to ensure that re-sit / re-take candidates are not assessed on questions they have previously seen and to ensure the entire standard is examined.

Assessment Methods 2, 3 and 4: Professional Discussion and Practical Assessments Unshod Trim and Shoeing Test

34. These assessments have traditionally been carried out at the Training Providers / Colleges distributed model. VetSkill propose to continue with this for the first iteration. Warwickshire College have only one apprentice so it is likely that EPAs will take place at Myerscough and Hereford, Ludlow and North Shropshire (HLNS) Colleges.
35. Thereafter VetSkill intend to review and consider a central model in consultation with the assessor team, FRC and colleges. The AP states that a venue must have a choice of either coke or gas fires, suitable number of horses, suitable steel and suitable areas for trotting up, shoe making and trimming and shoeing.
36. Health and Safety Policies and risk assessments have been received from each of the colleges; two of these have been reviewed by VetSkill.
37. The professional discussion will consist of three 10-minute stations.
38. A veterinary assessor will be responsible for a live horse and radiography viewing station.
39. A farrier assessor will ask general questions relating to farriery as well as specific questions on

behaviours and anatomy of the lower limb using morbid specimens.

40. A second farrier assessor will ask specific questions about their shoe board to authenticate evidence, experience and competence.
41. Horses of appropriate temperament, including spares, are required for the practical assessments. It is recommended that VetSkill confirm with the colleges that each of the horses used for the assessments are known to the Colleges to be well behaved in order to ensure each candidate has an equal chance of passing the assessment.
42. The unshod trim consists of trimming two front and two hind feet for an unshod finish. There is 15 minutes for preparation of a trimming plan, 45 minutes working and 15 minutes discussion post working.
43. A minimum of 5 questions must be asked by the IEPAs during the discussion of both the unshod trim and shoeing test assessments.
44. The shoeing test consists of: a 15-minute assessment by the apprentice of the equine provided to include filling out of the shoeing plan template; 2 hours practical and finishing of a front and back shoe; and a 15-minute discussion with IEPAs.
45. A veterinary assessor will assess the equines before and after shoeing and if they diagnose lameness caused by the apprentice, the result of the practical will be a fail. The veterinary assessor is also required to monitor equine welfare and to intervene if they observe unsafe practice which may cause distress or harm to the horse. Providing consent has been obtained they may sedate a horse to enable trimming or shoeing to be completed safely for the benefit of the horse, the apprentice and assessors.
46. For both the unshod trim and the shoeing test, VetSkill as the EPAO will set a bank of open questions to assess related underpinning KSBs.
47. For both the unshod trim and the shoeing test, VetSkill as the EPAO will produce specifications to outline in detail how the practical demonstrations will operate, what it will do and what should be looked for by the IEPAs.
48. The practical assessments will be marked on Valuatic Studio software. It is essential that the IEPAs / examiners are provided with training on this software so that they are competent using it during the assessments.

Quality Assurance

49. Internal quality assurance (IQA) must be undertaken by the EPAO and will be the responsibility of VetSkill.
50. The Planning and Delivery Document outlined that IQA would meet the requirements of the Farriery Standard ST0172 Assessment Plan.
51. Farrier and veterinary assessors appointed for the first EPA have all previously acted for the Worshipful Company of Farriers (WCF) and meet the requirements of the Assessment Plan i.e. farrier assessors all hold the WCF fellowship (FWCF).
52. VetSkill indicated that they operate a continual quality improvement mechanism for other qualifications and EPAs and would do the same for the Farrier EPA. Assessment materials are reviewed at least annually. Feedback from assessors is gathered following each EPA.
53. Video and / or sound recording of assessments is used where required and can form an important part of the quality assurance process. Apprentices are asked for signed confirmation that VetSkill can record prior to the EPA.

54. Audits from regulators and feedback from apprentices, employers (ATFs), and training providers (Colleges) will also inform the internal quality assurance process. There is a continuous process of quality improvement based on feedback and audits.
55. At least annually, each EPA has a formal Self-Assessment Report (SAR) prepared and AC were provided with an example of the template used.
56. External quality assurance will be provided by the FRC and Ofqual.
57. VetSkill are approved by Ofqual for the delivery of EPAs for several other apprenticeship Standards and therefore well used to meeting Ofqual's requirements. Approval for the Farriery EPA has been submitted.
58. Reliability of the assessments are checked by VetSkill looking at consistency between assessors, assessments and centres.
59. Assessment of bank data is used to check consistency in the Level of Demand between assessments and over time.
60. VetSkill is not a member of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) but written tests must comply with the JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations. These instructions include policies and procedures in relation to invigilation.

Provision for Re-Sit Apprentices for the DipWCF

61. The Diploma of the Worshipful Company of Farriers (DipWCF) is a level 3 qualification owned by WCF / Farriery Examinations Ltd.
62. The DipWCF examined by the WCF is no longer approved for entry to the FRC register.
63. VetSkill have contacted the WCF to offer to examine the DipWCF on their behalf. Vet Skill had not received a response at time of compiling this report.
64. The DipWCF differs from the EPA in several regards, which would need to be taken into account in setting the assessment. The EPA assesses knowledge, skills and behaviours and tool making, none of which are assessed in the DipWCF. The EPA includes an assessment on business and IT skills and an unshod trim not included in the DipWCF.
65. It was intended that two resit opportunities would be provided in Spring and Autumn 2023 and thereafter candidates would be migrated onto the EPA.
66. Migration to the EPA is an option for the resit candidates but they shall need to take all 4 assessments.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Farriers Registration Council (FRC) Approvals Committee (AC) met with VetSkill, who have applied to become an End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) and to provide the End Point Assessment (EPA) for the Farrier Standard ST0172, and also considered documentation requested from VetSkill in order to provide assurance to the FRC in relation to Section 11 of the Farriers (Registration) Act 1975 as amended.
2. The AC recommends to the FRC that the EPA to be provided by VetSkill be approved by the FRC as a prescribed qualification for entry in Part 1 of the Register subject to the recommendations in paragraph 3 below being implemented.
3. The AC recommends to the FRC that:
 - a) The Apprentice Guide is edited including as outlined in paragraph 23 above noting that some edits relate to the Standard and Assessment Plan both of which are owned by IfATE.
 - b) The Employer and Training Provider Guide is edited including as outlined in paragraph 25 above.
 - c) An Assessors Guide is produced.

- d) VetSkill confirm with the colleges that each of the horses used for the assessments are known to the Colleges to be well behaved in order to ensure each candidate has an equal chance of passing the practical assessments.
- e) For both the unshod trim and the shoeing test VetSkill, as the EPAO, set a bank of open questions to assess related underpinning KSBs as stipulated in the assessment plan.
- f) For both the unshod trim and the shoeing test VetSkill, as the EPAO, produce specifications to outline in detail the how the practical demonstrations will operate, what it will cover and what should be looked for by the IEPAs/examiners as stipulated in the assessment plan.
- g) The IEPAs / examiners are provided with training on the practical marking software so that they are competent using it before the practical assessments.
- h) AC members observe the written test, professional discussions and the practical assessments, the unshod trim and shoeing test, at the first instance of VetSkill's EPA to comply with FRC procedures and policies for AC and provide assurance to the FRC. Further recommendations may follow observation of these assessments.