



Premises Accreditation Scheme

Frequently Asked Questions

The Premises Accreditation Scheme

1. Where can the practice of veterinary medicine take place?

In accordance with Section 106 of the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, as amended (“the Act”), a registered person shall not practise veterinary medicine otherwise than at—

- (a) a premises to which a certificate of suitability applies,
- (b) a State premises,
- (c) a premises, including a farm, that is under the control of the person who owns the animal or who for the time being has custody of the animal that is under the care of a registered practitioner, which registered practitioner usually practises veterinary medicine at a premises to which a certificate of suitability applies,
- (d) an exempted place,
- (e) a place where an emergency veterinary procedure is performed.

2. What is a State premises?

A State premises means a premises that is under the control of a Minister of the Government, or a local authority.

3. What is an exempted place?

An exempted place being a place where the practice of veterinary medicine by a registered person occurs:

- (a) under regulations made under the European Communities Act 1972
- (b) by or under an Act that relates to
 - 1. export or slaughter of animals
 - 2. export of meat
- (c) under regulations made under section 107 (relating to sales and sporting events).

4. What is the Premises Accreditation Scheme?

The Veterinary Council's Premises Accreditation Scheme ("PAS") is a mandatory scheme introduced to regulate veterinary premises in the State in accordance with Part 9 of the Act. Under the PAS, all veterinary premises in the State must be registered and certified by the Veterinary Council. Through the PAS, the Veterinary Council regulates and maintains standards of veterinary premises in the State in the public interest by carrying out premises inspections and by requiring registered veterinary practitioners and registered veterinary nurses to comply with the requirements of the Scheme in their day-to-day practice.

5. How do the Council ensure that Registered Veterinary Premises maintain compliance with the PAS Standards?

The Veterinary Council carries out inspections of veterinary premises to ensure the maintenance of PAS Standards. The Veterinary Council appoints independently contracted Authorised Officers to carry out premises inspections on its behalf. The Veterinary Council may authorise the inspection of a veterinary premises for any of the following reasons:

- **A New Premises Application**

The Veterinary Council will authorise an inspection of a new veterinary premises to verify its compliance with the PAS Standards. An inspection report furnished to the Council by the appointed Authorised Officer following completion of the inspection will identify any non-conformances with the PAS Standards.

- **Routine Re-Visits to Registered Premises**

The Veterinary Council carries out routine re-visit inspections to approximately 25% of registered veterinary premises annually. This is to ensure that premises registered by the Council are maintaining the required PAS Standards. In general, the Veterinary Council will carry out a routine re-visit inspection to every registered premises at least once every four years. An inspection report furnished by the appointed Authorised Officer following completion of the inspection will identify any non-conformances with the PAS Standards for consideration by the Council. Routine revisit inspections, at the discretion of the Veterinary Council, may be either announced or unannounced.

- **Non-Routine Re-Visits**

In any case where the Veterinary Council considers that it is appropriate, it may authorise a re-visit inspection to a veterinary premises at any time to ensure compliance with the PAS Standards. An inspection report furnished by the appointed Authorised Officer following completion of the inspection will identify any non-conformances with the PAS Standards for consideration by the Council. Non-routine re-visit inspections, at the discretion of the Veterinary Council, may either be announced or unannounced.

6. What are the penalties for failure to register a premises with the Veterinary Council?

In accordance with Section 106 (1)(a) of the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, as amended, the practice of veterinary medicine is not permitted at or from any premises not registered on the Veterinary Council's Register of Certificates of Suitability. Under Section 123(1) of the Act a person who commits an offence under Section 106, is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding €3,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or, to both.

7. I work from my vehicle, do I have to register a premises?

Under Section 106 of the Act a registered person cannot practice veterinary medicine other than at and/or from a registered veterinary premises. If all a practices work is done on farms, studs, or other places where animals are kept, a registrant must still practise from a registered veterinary premises.

8. I only work part-time, do I have to register a premises?

Even if you only practise veterinary medicine or veterinary nursing part-time you must work at and/or from a Registered Veterinary Premises.

Certificate of Suitability Applications

1. What is the procedure for opening a new veterinary premises?

To gain premises accreditation and a Certificate of Suitability ("COS") under the Council's PAS, a COS application must first be made, and a premises inspection is then carried out to ensure that the premises is compliant with all the relevant PAS Standards and Regulations. The PAS Standards which must be met will depend on which premises classification the application is made under. A copy of the COS application and a report of the premises inspection are first considered by the Practice Premises Committee ("PPC"), who will then make its recommendations to the Council on whether to grant the COS, grant the COS with conditions or to refuse to grant. All **final decisions** on whether a COS is granted rests with the Council.

More information relating to the COS Application process for new premises is included in the "Guidelines for Making a COS application" document available in the PAS section on the Council's website, www.vci.ie.

2. What is a Certificate of Suitability?

When a veterinary premises has been registered by the Veterinary Council, a Certificate of Suitability ("COS") with a unique registration number for the premises is issued to the Registrant who made the application. The Registrant is the "COS Holder". The COS must be publicly displayed at the veterinary premises, to assure members of the public that the premises has been certified by the Veterinary Council.

3. Can a person not registered with the Veterinary Council of Ireland apply for a Certificate of Suitability?

COS Applications may only be submitted by persons registered with the Veterinary Council.

4. What requirements must a registered veterinary premises meet?

The Veterinary Council's PAS Standards set out the requirements to be met by veterinary premises in order to be eligible for registration and to receive a COS. The PAS Standards set out the requirements in relation to the physical bricks and mortar of a premises, the information to be available and displayed at the premises, the facilities and equipment to be available, the services to be provided, and the various regulations to be adhered to. Registrants who apply to the Council for a Certificate of Suitability in respect of a veterinary premises must ensure that the premises adheres to the minimum PAS Standards applicable. The Veterinary Council, in carrying out the physical inspection of a veterinary premises, verifies its eligibility for registration by assessing its compliance with the PAS Standards.

5. What are the different types of veterinary premises registered with the Council?

To reflect the different types of veterinary services offered at registered veterinary premises in the State, the Veterinary Council has established five different classifications of registered veterinary premises as follows:

- Registered Veterinary Office
- Registered Veterinary Clinic
- Registered Veterinary Hospital
- Registered Veterinary Facility
- Registered Mobile Veterinary Unit

Each classification of registered veterinary premises has a unique set of applicable PAS Standards and requirements. The classification of a registered premises is assigned on the following basis:

- The PAS Standards met by the premises
- The nature of the veterinary services being offered by the veterinary practice
- Whether or not animals are treated at the premises
- The location of the premises
- The facilities and equipment available at the premises
- The target clientele

For more information relating to the PAS Standards and requirements for each premises classification, please see the PAS Regulations and PAS Standards documents available in the PAS section on the Council's website, www.vci.ie.

6. What can I name my veterinary premises?

PAS Regulations 38 – 43 outline the requirements regarding registered veterinary premises names. The premises name must be legal and appropriate and must reflect the professional nature of the acts of veterinary medicine being practised at the veterinary premises. Premises names, as they appear on the COS Register, should not include the term 'Limited/LTD' as per section 54 (2) of the Act.

7. Who will carry out the premises inspection?

A panel of Authorised Officers carry out all premises inspections. The panel consists of independently contracted veterinary practitioners with experience in practice. The panel of Authorised Officers receive ongoing training from the Council.

8. Where more than one veterinary practitioner practises at/from that premises, whose name will be on the Certificate of Suitability?

If more than one Registrant carries out the practice of veterinary medicine at a premises, only one registered person shall be designated the Certificate of Suitability Holder in respect of that premises.

9. What is the role of the Certificate of Suitability Holder?

The COS Holder is the registered person to whom the COS is granted by the Council. The COS Holder is the Council's point of contact in relation to the practice premises and in respect of the PAS. The COS Holder is responsible for ensuring that the practice premises is compliant with the PAS Regulations and PAS Standards in the registered practice premises classification. If more than one COS is held by a COS Holder, they must have direct knowledge and influence over the clinical services being offered at each registered veterinary premises. The COS Holder must ensure that only registrants with the Council are practising veterinary medicine/veterinary nursing at and/or from the premises and that it is carried out in compliance with the Act. The COS Holder is a person who holds a suitable/significant position of authority within the veterinary practice, which empowers them to discharge all COS Holder responsibilities.

10. How long does a COS last?

The COS in respect of any registered veterinary premises is issued by the Council for a defined validity period. This means that each COS issued in respect of a registered veterinary premises will have an expiration date, after which a renewal application must be submitted in order for the practice of veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing at or from the premises to continue. In general, unless otherwise determined by the Council, a COS is issued for a four-year period.

11. How do I apply to renew my COS?

COS Holders must submit a COS renewal application, to be considered by the Council, in order for the practice of veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing at/from the premises to continue. A decision will be made by the Council under section 112 (1) of the Act 2005, to grant, to grant with conditions or to refuse to grant a COS in respect of a premises.

If the COS renewal application is successful, the veterinary premises will remain registered and the practice of veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing at/from the premises can continue. The registered veterinary premises will receive a new COS with a new number and updated expiry date.

Changes to a Registered Veterinary Premises

1. I intend to retire within the next four years, can I obtain a refund of the COS fee?

Upon the revocation of a COS for a premises, where the practice of veterinary medicine at/from the premises will cease, a COS Holder may apply to the Council for a partial refund of the COS fee not utilised up to the date of revocation. The Council will consider any application for a refund upon the revocation of a COS on a case-by-case basis, and the determination of any refund is a matter for the Council.

Any COS Holder in the revocation of a COS, where a new COS is granted to another registered person enabling the continuation of the practice of veterinary medicine at/from the premises, is not entitled to apply to the Council for a partial refund of the COS fee.

2. Can I apply to change my registered veterinary premises classification?

To apply to change a registered veterinary premises classification, the COS Holder is required to submit an updated COS application form in the desired premises classification. A premises inspection is then carried out to ensure that the premises is compliant with all the relevant PAS Standards and Regulations. A copy of the COS application and a report of the premises inspection is first considered by the PPC, who will then make its recommendations to the Council on whether to grant the COS or not. All **final decisions** on whether a COS is granted rests with the Council.

3. Is a Certificate of Suitability transferable?

As stated in PAS Regulation 29, a COS is non-transferable and shall apply to one veterinary premises only at its registrable address. In circumstances where it is intended to relocate premises the COS holder is required to submit a new COS application.

4. Can a change in COS Holder take place?

As stated in PAS Regulation 29, a COS is non-transferable. If you no longer wish to be the COS Holder for a registered veterinary premises, you must submit a COS Revocation Request for consideration by Council, and an updated PAS Declaration. The proposed new COS holder must submit a completed new COS application form for the premises. The change in COS holder will then go before the PPC for consideration, followed by the Council for a final decision.

5. Can I update the premises name after it has been registered with the Council?

To update the name of a registered veterinary premises as it appears on the Council's COS Register the COS Holder must submit a COS application form with the updated premises name for consideration by Council. If the premises name change is granted, an updated COS will issue to the premises. PAS Regulations 38 - 43 outline the requirements for veterinary premises names.

6. The practise of veterinary medicine no longer takes place at the premises for which I was the Certificate Holder, what should I do?

If a registered veterinary premises is closing, the COS Holder is required to notify the Council by submitting a COS Revocation form. Once a COS is revoked, the practice of veterinary medicine at and/or from this premises is no longer permitted under section 106 (1)(a) of the Act and the Veterinary Medicines Division of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine will be notified of such.

Premises Accreditation Scheme Declaration

1. What is a PAS Declaration?

In accordance with PAS Regulation 15, each Registrant is required to provide a PAS Declaration to the Council. The PAS Declaration requests confirmation on whether a Registrant is practising veterinary medicine or nursing at/from a registered veterinary premises, a State premises or an exempted place, or if a Registrant is retired/non-practising.

2. How can I submit/update my PAS declaration?

A PAS Declaration can be submitted online on the Council's website or by returning a completed PAS Declaration form to the Council offices. You are required to provide an updated PAS Declaration if your employment details change.

3. I practise veterinary medicine or veterinary nursing solely in Northern Ireland, what should I include on my PAS Declaration?

If you are not practising veterinary medicine or nursing in the Republic of Ireland, you are considered non-practising in terms of the Premises Accreditation Scheme.

4. I locum for several different registered veterinary premises, how should I fill out my PAS Declaration?

A PAS Declaration will have to be made in respect of each locum position.

Contact

For more information on the Council's Premises Accreditation Scheme, please contact the Council's Executive office by email to pas@vci.ie, or by phone on 01 6684402. Additional information is also available on the Council's website, www.vci.ie.