EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

THE VETERINARY SURGEONS (RECOGNITION OF UNIVERSITY DEGREE) (HARPER AND KEELE) ORDER OF COUNCIL 2025

2025 No. 1082

1. Introduction

1.1 This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and is laid before Parliament by Command of His Majesty.

2. Declaration

2.1 Baroness Hayman of Ullock, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs confirms that this Explanatory Memorandum meets the required standard.

2.2 Ele Brown, Deputy Director for the Veterinary Policy Team, at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs confirms that this Explanatory Memorandum meets the required standard.

3. Contact

3.1 Natasha Widdowson at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs can be contacted by email at the following address with any queries regarding the instrument: gvs@defra.gov.uk. Alternatively, the department can be contacted by telephone: +44 (0) 3459 335577.

Part One: Explanation, and context, of the Instrument

4. Overview of the Instrument

What does the legislation do?

4.1 This instrument recognises the joint degree of Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery (BVetMS) conferred by Harper Adams and Keele Universities' Harper and Keele Veterinary School ("Harper and Keele"). Recognition of the degree entitles its holders to be registered in the Register of Veterinary Surgeons kept by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons ("RCVS"), upon making an application and paying the fee prescribed by regulation of the Council of the RCVS under section 11 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 ("VSA"). Such registration is a necessary precondition to the lawful practice of veterinary surgery in the United Kingdom. On registration, the holder of the degree becomes a member of the RCVS.

Where does the legislation extend to, and apply?

4.2 The extent of this instrument (that is, the jurisdiction(s) which the instrument forms part of the law of) is England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

4.3 The territorial application of this instrument (that is, where the instrument produces a practical effect) is England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

5. Policy Context

What is being done and why?

5.1 Regulation of the veterinary profession is necessary to protect animal and public health and welfare. The VSA establishes that (with a very few specific exceptions) only registered veterinary surgeons may practise veterinary surgery in the United Kingdom. Regulation of the veterinary profession under the Act includes registration of veterinary surgeons and regulation of their professional education.

5.2 The Privy Council has been advised by the RCVS that the Harper and Keele veterinary degree meets the requirements set out in the VSA referred to in paragraph 6.3. To allow graduates of this degree to register with the RCVS and practise as veterinary surgeons in the United Kingdom, recognition of the universities' joint degree through an Order is needed.

What was the previous policy, how is this different?

5.3 Harper Adams University and Keele University have not previously had an accredited veterinary degree.

6. Legislative and Legal Context

How has the law changed?

6.1 Under section 3 of the VSA, the Privy Council may make a recognition order directing that any person who has undergone courses of study and examinations at a specified United Kingdom university, as a result of which the university has conferred a veterinary degree on that person, may be registered in the Register of Veterinary Surgeons and become a member of the RCVS.

6.2 Under section 19 of the VSA it is unlawful (with certain limited exceptions) for a person to practise, or hold themselves out as practising, veterinary surgery without being registered in the Register of Veterinary Surgeons or the supplementary veterinary register.

6.3 To make a recognition order, it must appear to the Privy Council, after consultation with the Council of the RCVS, that the courses of study and examinations are sufficient to guarantee that holders of the degree will have acquired the knowledge and skill needed to practise veterinary surgery efficiently.

6.4 The Privy Council has been advised by the RCVS that the Harper and Keele veterinary degree meets that standard, so it has made the recognition order.

Why was this approach taken to change the law?

6.5 This is the only possible approach to make the necessary changes.

7. Consultation

Summary of consultation outcome and methodology

7.1 It was not considered appropriate to consult the public on this Order given that the Privy Council relies, in accordance with the VSA, on consultation with the RCVS to satisfy itself that the Order may be made.

7.2 The inspection procedure applied by the RCVS before advising the Privy Council involved representation from Australia and South Africa, as well as UK-based veterinary surgeons, both in practice and in universities. The inspection report has

been considered and approved by all relevant RCVS committees and the RCVS Council.

7.3 The devolved governments have been informed of this Order.

8. Applicable Guidance

8.1 No special guidance is necessary.

Part Two: Impact and the Better Regulation Framework

9. Impact Assessment

9.1 A full Impact Assessment has not been prepared for this instrument because the instrument has no impact on business, charities or voluntary bodies, except that, by increasing the number of qualified veterinary surgeons on the market, it could assist businesses in being able to hire appropriately trained and local vets.

Impact on businesses, charities and voluntary bodies

9.2 There is no, or no significant, impact on business, charities or voluntary bodies because the only effect of this instrument is to allow Harper and Keele veterinary graduates to practise as veterinary surgeons and become members of the RCVS.

9.3 The legislation does not impact small or micro businesses.

9.4 There is no, or no significant, impact on the public sector because the only effect of this instrument is to allow Harper and Keele veterinary graduates to practise as veterinary surgeons and become members of the RCVS.

10. Monitoring and review

What is the approach to monitoring and reviewing this legislation?

10.1 The approach to monitoring this legislation is that the RCVS routinely monitors the standards of recognised veterinary degrees and periodically advises the Privy Council as to whether a degree should continue to be recognised. There will be no monitoring or review of the provisions of this instrument unless advice is received from the RCVS of the need to withdraw or amend recognition.

Part Three: Statements and Matters of Particular Interest to Parliament

11. Matters of special interest to Parliament

11.1 None.

12. European Convention on Human Rights

12.1 As the instrument is subject to negative procedure and does not amend primary legislation, no statement is required.

13. The Relevant European Union Acts

13.1 This instrument is not made under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, the European Union (Future Relationship) Act 2020 or the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (“relevant European Union Acts”).