

Staying in touch



Building Success: Navigating Coaching & Contracts with Confidence

Coaching a student veterinary nurse, veterinary nurse assistant, or a veterinary student can be a hugely rewarding activity and a dedicated role within the workplace. It can also be challenging and time-consuming, especially when there is a level of malfunction or malalignment between the coacher and the coached.

If there is a level of malalignment between the two parties, this can quickly cause the relationship to suffer, causing angst and worry for all parties involved, and development progress may be slowed significantly.

To have a successful coaching experience, both parties must understand that coaching is not something that you do to people, but something that you do with people, which requires a two-way communication process. When this process is working well, it can be motivating and empowering for those involved and a positive driver of performance.

A high performer is a person who produces consistent and outstanding results in their work due to having a combination of skills, qualities, and attributes, such as:

- Being an effective communicator and having adaptability and flexibility
- Have a sense of self-direction, drive, initiative, and problem-solving skills
- Has a sense of intellectual curiosity and accepts ownership, can collaborate, and demonstrates coachability

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A low performer is a person who does not meet the expectations of their job role, which may be due to many different factors that may require further exploration.

A low performer may fall below the standard required in the workplace. A negative attitude to work, low productivity, misconduct, and poor professional behaviour, such as failure to meet deadlines or perform required and set tasks.

Dealing with and trying to coach a low-performing worker presents challenges that often take up the most amount of time, which then may leave average or high performers having less support and coaching time.

Lower performers are not likely to improve with just coaching alone, there is often a requirement for training and management to increase performance outcomes.



Before coaching the individual, it is prudent for the coach and the coachee to discuss and agree on areas to be coached and create a set of principles to work together. There are clear advantages to doing this, such as:

The goals of coaching are:

- **To help others prepare and see the need for development and change**
 - **Enable and facilitate success for others**
 - **Improvement of performance and resultant success**
 - **Develop and build strengths and weaknesses**
 - **Commitment to common goals**
 - **To sustain organisation values and culture**
- Sets the scene working together
 - Expectations and ground rules are to be set clearly
 - Develops transparency and trust between both parties
 - Allows details that are important to both parties to be included
 - Develops an understanding of how best to coach the individual
 - Help understand the individual's needs
 - Helps the individual feel important and heard

There are many different coaching contract templates available freely via a range of internet sources that can be adapted to suit the individual needs of the two parties and the business.

However, a good starting point is for both parties to consider the following questions:

1. How do I want us to work together?
2. What is important to me?

Both parties should then share their answers and discuss how they wish to work together. It is essential to be honest when answering these questions because this helps to develop honesty and transparency about what is important to each individual.

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A coaching contract may be presented as a table.

From the coach's perspective	From the coachee's perspective
How do I want us to work together? What is important to me?	How do I want us to work together? What is important to me?

There are some consistent and key themes that should be considered at the outset when setting up and designing a coaching contract, which are communication, administration, and personal requirements, such as moral, professional, and personal ethics.

An example of the above themes may be:

Communication

How many times do we need to talk in a week?

If you're not happy with something, please talk to me about it

If a mistake is made, be honest so that we can sort it

I like to reflect on things....

If I am feeling worried about learning skills, I would like to talk to you about it

Administration and reports

Ensure that reports/CSL actions are completed by the set deadline. If you think that you are going to miss a deadline, tell me in advance and not on the day

I expect you to meet the company's objectives and standards

Be honest at open at all times

Trust, if I talk to you about something confidential then I expect it to remain confidential

When completing a coaching contract, it is important to discuss and be clear about professional boundaries and the requirements of commitment to study to achieve the qualification.

When undertaking initial conversations and setting the working relationship, it is ok to use probing questions to elicit key information, but whilst doing this, ensure that the key points are recorded and documented.

Remember, this is a **two-way process** where both parties can outline key expectations and detail what is personally important and ensure that you are both happy with the contents, but it is also vital to discuss how you both intend to make this happen.

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During any meeting or tutorial, ensure that this takes place in a suitable environment, use active listening, and any narrative used must be appropriate. Once the 'coaching contract' has been discussed and created, revisit the document regularly to ensure that both parties are still in agreement and enacting the agreed terms, and to check that it is working well, or if there is something that needs adding. If the agreements in the contract are not reached, it is essential that this is addressed early and the reasons for this. The coaching contract can be a very useful tool to be part of the routine appraisal process.

Topic

What is it that you want to achieve? This may be a big skill, consider the individual steps and working this out with the learner. The coach controls the skills the pace of the learning.

- Is it measurable?
- Challenging and desirable?
- What is your perspective, define the topic

Impact

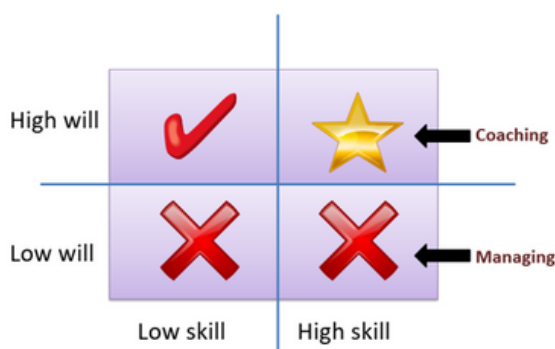
- What is the impact/implications/consequences of...?
- How will this impact on...?
- What will happen if you do/don't?

Plan

- Who might be able to help you?
- What are the constraints?
- Is it a belief or fact?
- Where are we now?

Sustain

- When will you carry out these actions?
- What are the consequences?
- What might stop you from doing this?
- What will be the consequences?



If you are struggling with a learner where they are not completing actions and meeting deadlines it is worthwhile considering the learners motivation levels. A student that has a 'high will' requires coaching, mentoring and support to achieve. A learner that is 'low will' requires management.

At Abbeydale, our commitment lies in nurturing success through expert coaching and transparent contracts. We recognise that challenges may occur, and we are here to assist you at every turn.

Whether it's through offering advice, providing guidance, or addressing student concerns, you can count on our dedication to creating a positive and productive experience for everyone.



Behind the Scenes: Meet the Minds of Abbeydale

You've checked out our bios on the website and socials, but now it's time to dive deep and really meet the crew...

What is your favourite animal, and why?

Cats (though ducks come a close second!) Initially, it was dogs and horses, but once I started working in a small animal practice and later a cattery, I turned into a crazy cat lady!

How did you first become interested in Veterinary Nursing?

Originally, I wanted to train as a Equine Veterinary Nurse but after spending 18 months working full time in an Equine practice which left me with no time to enjoy my horses, I decided to keep horses as a hobby and ended up working in a small animal practice where I quickly realised that it was easier to clean up after a Bitch Spay than a Colic!

What is the funniest or most memorable moment you have had whilst working with animals?

I had recently started working as a SVN when I was called to assist a newly qualified Vet with an emergency case involving a cat suffering from Ethylene Glycol poisoning. When I entered the dispensary, I found an opened bottle of Vodka and no Vet present. Initially, I panicked, until I discovered the Vet administering the Vodka to the cat. At that time, I was unaware that such an unconventional treatment could be used to counteract the effects of the poison. This experience is one that has remained memorable throughout my career.

What is the quirkiest or most unexpected skill you have developed?

Discovering just how strong my transitional cells were, a nurse's bladder is something to be proud of!

What advice would you give to someone dreaming of becoming a vet nurse?

Though much has changed in Veterinary nursing since I trained, I think the one thing that remains constant is we all choose this career because of our love of animals and the desire and commitment to advocate the best possible care for every patient. Remembering this, especially during tough times, will be invaluable in helping you succeed and becoming a proud RVN.



Laura Bartlett-Smith BSc (Hons)

Office Admin

CLINICAL COACH STANDARDISATION EVENTS 2025



Online sessions:

- Monday, 19th May 2 pm-4 pm
- Wednesday, 16th July 5 pm-7 pm
- Tuesday, 11th November 6 pm-8 pm

In-person:

- Monday, 15th September 11 am-1 pm

Topic 's being covered this year include;

- Preparing students for nursing consultations
- Quality assurance – how can a coach support/encourage a student with this
- The use of expert witnesses
- Care bundles vs care plans

Presented by our IQA's, Hil Varlow and Juliet Whatley



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VETNURSETRAINING.CO.UK