

Guidelines to producing successful VNRT assignments

In order to obtain your CertVNRT or DipVNRT you have to produce several pieces of coursework which must be passed. Some of you may have only recently passed your veterinary nurse qualification so producing coursework of a satisfactory quality may be quite straightforward. Others of you may have qualified many years ago and be a little out of touch with essay writing. Whatever your experience of producing assignments you may all benefit from some advice on how to pass your VNRT coursework, and you should find the following hints and tips useful:

- **Make sure the layout is correct**

- The Course Handbook has a very clear description of how your assignments should be laid out. This information is also available on the website under 'Resources'. Please adhere to this guidance for all assignments.
- Your coursework should have a front page containing your name, address (for return of your marked coursework), module title, and total number of words (if that assignment has a word limit).
- All assignments should be typed using **Arial 11 font**, and **double spaced**.
- Every page should contain your name and a page number.
- References should be included and referencing should be done using a recognised system. One example is shown in your Course Handbook, but you are free to use any other system as long as it is a recognised system.

- **Read the question thoroughly**

- Although this may seem an obvious comment and one I'm sure you've heard many times before (at school and college) it nevertheless remains sensible advice.
- Every piece of coursework is divided into several sections, each having a mark allocated. If one section is ignored then no marks at all can be achieved for this section, and this could amount to 25% or even 30% of the total marks. Obviously you then have to achieve even better marks in the remaining sections to reach the pass mark of 50%.
- So always ensure you have covered every section in the question, and made an attempt to answer every part.

- **Include pictures/photos whenever possible**

- A picture or photo can replace a whole paragraph of text, as well as making the assignment a better experience to mark, so it is always worth including a number of pictures or diagrams in your assignments. If you should decide to use pictures, always ensure:
 - The picture is a good size so the detail of the picture can be seen. A half-page is a good size for most pictures.
 - Every picture should be relevant to your answer, and include a title explaining what the picture is illustrating, e.g. 'Diagram of a canine shoulder showing position of the major ligaments'.
 - Include labels where necessary.

- You can draw your own pictures or use your own photos, but if you 'borrow' a picture from a book/article/website etc always ensure you have referenced it properly. If you use your own pictures you do not need to reference them.
- **Make text succinct but detailed and relevant**
 - When there is no word limit, there is sometimes a tendency to produce very skimpy coursework. All assignments should be of a decent length, but it is **not** good to:
 - Include a lot of 'waffle'
 - Copy chunks of text from your course notes
 - Copy ideas from books/articles/websites/course notes without referencing them
 - Hand in coursework that is too skimpy
 - Assignments should:
 - Have sufficient detail so I can be sure you understand what you are explaining
 - Have sufficient 'substance' so that everything is covered in enough detail and the information is all relevant to the question.
 - If you are copying ideas from your course notes or other sources that is fine as long as they are re-written in your own way (i.e. don't just hand in chunks of your course notes that I have actually written myself).
 - I would expect most assignments to be at least 15-20+ pages long (several assignments I have already marked are in excess of 50+ pages, and most successful assignments have in the region of 20-40 pages). This doesn't mean that quantity is the most important thing; quality is always preferred, but there must be sufficient 'substance' to your assignments. Assignments of less than 10 pages are very unlikely to have sufficient detail to pass.
 - Always read through your assignments before sending them in to ensure there are no silly mistakes with layout, grammar, referencing etc. Occasionally students have re-written notes and during the process have jiggled the words around to such an extent that they no longer have the same meaning as the original notes, and sometimes they make no sense at all. By re-reading them (or getting a friend/relative to proof read them) you can be sure they are appropriate to send in.
- **Give your assignment some structure**
 - Everyone will have their own way of writing assignments, but the following can be very helpful:
 - Contents list - having a 'Contents' list at the beginning can help you plan your work a little better, give it some structure and certainly make it easier for me to follow what you are doing. It's not essential to have one but it can help improve a piece of work. Some students have also included an 'Illustrations' list containing a listing (and page numbers) of all their pictures and diagrams.

- Sections - these can also help make your work appear more organised and easier to follow. Dividing your work into sections provides structure to your work, it clarifies your thought processes to me, and also avoids the whole document being just one long chunk of text that jumps around without any clear structure.
- **Take note of my comments**
 - When you receive your first assignment back with your mark it will inevitably have a lot of red writing over it; it will also have a page or two of comments at the back. These comments are there to guide you and help you produce better assignments in future. If there are specific comments about certain things such as referencing, layout, pictures, length/detail of assignment etc then make sure you concentrate on these and improve them in your next assignment. Most students receive higher marks for subsequent assignments because they take note of faults identified in their initial assignments and correct them.
- **Two copies are always required**
 - You should all be aware that I need 2 copies of each assignment, an electronic copy (that can be sent via email or on a disc) and a hard copy (a paper copy sent via the post). The electronic copy is for me to file as a reference copy, and the hard copy is for marking, and it is this copy that is returned to you with my comments and your mark. So please be aware that I will not even start marking your work until the hard copy is available to me.
 - Electronic copies should be sent to me at caninephysio@yahoo.co.uk
 - Hard copies should be sent to me at my new address:

Peagham Lodge
 St Giles
 Torrington
 Devon
 EX38 7HZ

- When you send your work by post please make sure that the postage is appropriate. I have had situations when insufficient postage has been paid and I have had to pay the correct postage plus a handling fee to obtain the letter. This not only creates delays, but also unnecessary expense for me, so if this situation does occur in the future, I will inform the student regarding the cost and will only mark the work on receipt of the additional cost.

By taking note of these guidelines you should be sure that the work you hand in fulfils all the basic requirements. All you need to do in addition is make sure you answer the question to an adequate standard, and always keep in the back of your mind that the only way I can be sure that you fully understand the principles/rules of rehabilitation is due to what I read in your assignments (this is

especially true for students taking the CertVNRT when there is no exam as such), and this forms the basis of whether you pass the assignment and how well you pass it!

Good luck!

Brian