



How to become a Specialist

In order to become an ECVS Diplomate there is a minimum 4-year Training Programme comprising a minimum of a one-year internship programme or its equivalent, and a minimum of a 3-year ECVS-approved Residency Programme under the supervision and guidance of a Diplomate of the College. Internships and Residencies are either offered by referral practices or by universities and open positions are advertised in the veterinary press of the different European countries.

Internship

An internship is a minimum of 12 months structured multidisciplinary clinical training programme that emphasises mentorship, direct supervision, and didactic experiences including rounds, seminars, and formal presentations.

Alternatively, a minimum of 24 months of clinical practice experience may be acceptable. The assessment of the candidate's pre-residency experience is in the possibility of the ECVS programme director. The final decision is made by the Board of Regents on the recommendations of the Credentials Committee.

Residency

A residency is an advanced training in a specialty in veterinary medicine that is intended to lead to specialty certification in a European Board of Veterinary Specialisation (EBVS)-recognized veterinary specialty College. Colleges establish guidelines for those residencies that will be approved as appropriate training for candidates for specialty certification. An approved residency programme is conducted under the supervision of a board-certified specialist. A residency is usually narrowly confined to a specific discipline. A residency may in some instances be combined with an advanced degree programme.

ECVS offers two types of Residency programmes; a Standard Veterinary Surgery Residency Programme (SVSRP) and an Alternate Veterinary Surgery Training Programme (AVSTP).

Standard Veterinary Surgery Residency Programme (Standard VSRP)

The minimal length of a residency programme is three years (156 weeks including vacations) of full time (at least 35 hours each week) training devoted to matters directly concerned with the Standard VSRP. Training can take place on a part time basis as long as the total time is equivalent to at least three years, and the total time does not exceed six years. In case of maternity (leave), illness or under exceptional circumstances a prolongation is possible with the agreement of the College.

It is not acceptable to combine a Standard VSRP with study for other post-graduate qualifications, which would normally require an element of full time study (for example PhD). It is, however, possible to combine a “Masters” programme with a Standard VSRP, providing this does not compromise other aspects of the VSRP.

Alternate Veterinary Surgery Training Programme (Alternate VSTP)

In exceptional circumstances a Resident can work in a training centre in an Alternate VSTP without daily direct supervision of a specialist surgeon. Trainees will be required to complete an Alternate VSTP of at least 3 years but the total time of an alternate programme must not exceed six years. A resident on an Alternate VSTP must spend the equivalent of at least 60% of 3 years working in a surgical practice, under the direct supervision of a Diplomate of the College. Candidates hoping to establish a Alternate VSTP should be aware that this is often a much harder route to successful membership of the College than a Standard VSRP.

ECVS does not have a list of approved residencies since their availability varies (a Diplomate is not allowed to have more than two Residents at any one time other than in exceptional circumstances). However, most residencies are either offered by referral practices or by universities and open positions are advertised in the veterinary press. In choosing your programme, it is worth asking the success rate of previous residents passing the certifying examination at that practice/university.

Certifying Examination

Veterinarians who successfully complete their residency have to pass the certifying examination to become a Diplomate of the ECVS. The exam is held over two days and consists of three parts. A Case-based Examination with written answers to assess surgical principles of case management prior to, during, and after surgery. A Practical Examination with written answers designed to test recognition and interpretative skills. And a set of 100 multiple-choice questions covering areas of basic science, surgical knowledge and current scientific publications. After being accepted to sit the examination, the candidate has a total of four attempts to pass all three parts of the examination within 8 years.

Diplomate ECVS

Residents who pass the certifying examination become Diplomates of the ECVS and may call themselves Dip.ECVS, Dipl.ECVS or Diplomate of ECVS. They are deemed to be *active* members and will appear on the EBVS list of specialists as a European Veterinary Specialist in Small Animal Surgery, European Veterinary Specialist in Large Animal Surgery (Equine) or European Veterinary Specialist in Large Animal Surgery (Food animals). To remain on the active list Diplomates need to recertify every five years demonstrating they are still active in their field spending at least 60% of the working week in the field of veterinary surgery.

For further information regarding the above-described topics, see www.ecvs.org and read the [Training Brochure](#) and [Examination Guidelines](#).