

# **Pre-veterinary Advising Guide**

UMD Dept of Animal and Avian Sciences

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A guide for students in all four years of their undergraduate education who are considering applying to veterinary school. This guide considers the education, commitment and financial resources a student needs to succeed in veterinary school and veterinary medicine.

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## Introduction

A doctor of veterinary medicine (DVM or VMD) degree can be a passport into a wonderful array of professional opportunities in the medical sciences. Veterinarians are able to work with a large variety of species in a diverse array of jobs ranging from clinical practice to research to wildlife conservation to academia to government and regulatory medicine, to name just a few. That said, veterinary medicine is not for everyone who is interested in working with animals. It is the aim of this guide to prompt you to consider the major issues and consider if a veterinary medical education is right for you, and to help you be a successful applicant if you chose to apply.

What follows is not meant to be an all-inclusive guide; rather, it is a starting point for further exploration and planning your undergraduate education and extra-curricular experiences in preparation for admission to American veterinary schools.

## The profession

Veterinary medicine is a broad discipline, and its practitioners work in a wide array of clinical and corporate fields. Veterinarians in clinical practice provide medical care to a large range of animals in a variety of settings to diagnose animal health problems, create preventative medicine programs, manage the treatment of a variety of diseases, perform surgery, and advise owners about the care of their animals. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA, [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org)), approximately 80% of licensed veterinarians in this country work in private clinical practice. Of those, around 77% treat pets (cats, dogs, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds), approximately 16% work in food animal practice, and about 6% treat horses exclusively. A current area of need in clinical veterinary medicine is for large animal practitioners in rural settings. There is currently a federal government tuition remission subsidy available to veterinarians who agree to practice in underserved rural areas. Clinical veterinarians can also work in the arenas of lab animal medicine, zoo, aquarium, and wildlife medicine. A growing and much-needed sector of veterinary medicine exists within the field of public health. Veterinarians working in this capacity may work in a research capacity to better understand important infectious and zoonotic diseases. They may also work “in the field” as inspectors and consultants to help control and prevent diseases on the farm and in other settings. Additionally, veterinarians work as educators, teaching undergraduate, graduate and veterinary students .

The job outlook for veterinarian has been challenged by the decline in the general economy in recent years. In private practice and research, the demand for high-quality medicine for all animals has led to an increase in demand for veterinary services and research to develop new drugs, products and techniques. On the other hand, stagnant household incomes and high unemployment have limited the amount of money that many owners have to spend on their animals. We have seen this reflected in the average starting salary of new graduates from veterinary school, which actually declined slightly in 2012. The recognition of the interrelationship between human, animal and environmental health (“One Health”) has expanded roles for veterinarians in the areas of conservation, public health and regulatory medicine, although this is still a relatively small areas of veterinary practice. The importance of veterinarians in the production of a safe and humane food supply underlines a strong need for more veterinarians working in food animal medicine. The need for safe and effective feeds, drugs and equipment for humans and animals also underlines the need for veterinarians working within regulatory agencies. Recently, the number of veterinarians graduating from veterinary school in the US each year has increased as US schools increase their enrollments. There are currently 28 colleges of veterinary medicine in the US, 3 in Canada and 2 in the Caribbean which, according to the AAVMA, enrolled 11,900 students (over all 4 class years) in 2011-2012.

Regardless of the species or the setting, veterinarians work with people and animals, and should enjoy doing both. Veterinarians are often confronted with health issues that are further influenced by the needs of animal owners, society and government. Furthermore, while a veterinarian may one day chose to specialize in the care of one or a few species of animals, the training requires knowledge of many species and settings of animals.

Does it sound like a career in veterinary medicine is right for you? Do you want to know more? Talk to veterinarians who practice in the areas that interest you. Ask them about their pre-veterinary experiences, what school they attended, what experiences they had during school and after that have helped them, and what advice they have for those trying to enter the profession. Everyone will have a different point of view and different advice to give, so talk to many veterinarians (they’ll be a great network for you once you have graduated and need a job).

## Why do you want to go to veterinary school?

If you are considering veterinary school, the very first question you need to ask yourself is “Why do I want to go to veterinary school?” In formulating your answer, ask yourself the following questions:

What drew you to the profession in the first place? What draws you to it now?

What career path do you envision for yourself? How does having a DVM degree help you to achieve that goal? Is there a particular discipline within veterinary medicine that interests you ?

What makes you want a professional degree in animal medicine rather than an advanced degree in another field such as biology, animal sciences, behavior, ecology, biochemistry or another scientific discipline?

Have you considered other careers working with animals such as farm manager, veterinary technician, ecologist, educator, behaviorist, for example?

In considering veterinary school, understand that you should enjoy working with many different species, and that you should also enjoy working with people. While you may only work with a few species once you have graduated from vet school, you will be asked to work with a large range of species that will include cats, dogs, rabbits, ferrets, rodents, horses, cows, sheep, goats, pigs, chickens, and wildlife of all kinds. You should also enjoy working with people and possess strong interpersonal and communication skills. While veterinarians treat animals, they work with and for other people, so “people skills” are a must.

Many students want to go to veterinary school because they like animals and they enjoy science and medicine. While this is an admirable start, the commitment to become a veterinarian must be made because there is simply no other profession out there that would satisfy your personal and professional interests. Being a veterinarian is fun, intellectually invigorating, and personally rewarding; however, the profession also has its drawbacks. In school and once you are out in practice, you should expect to work long hours with duties on nights, weekends and holidays. You should expect to have many demands on both your time and talents, and you should expect that each day will pose sometimes difficult clinical, professional, and personal challenges. Finally, you should know that the cost of a veterinary medical education has the potential to put a significant financial burden on you and your future family. For the veterinarian who truly loves the profession, these challenges are offset by the satisfaction they get from their jobs. It is important to make sure that you will be happy with the benefits and the drawbacks of your choice to pursue a career in the profession.

## The successful applicant

Once you have decided that veterinary school is right for you, you must find out if you possess the right qualifications to be accepted. Admissions standards have increased over the last 20 years as the applicant pool has grown in size and credentials. Below is a summary of what veterinary admissions committees are evaluating in their applicants.

### *Pre-requisite courses*

Each veterinary school has its own set of requirements, although in general, the core requirements for admission include:

- One or two semesters of English
- One to three semesters of courses in the social sciences and humanities
- Two semesters of Biology with a laboratory component
- Two semesters of General Chemistry with a laboratory component
- Two semesters of Organic Chemistry with a laboratory component.
- Two semesters of Physics with a laboratory component
- One or two semesters of Biochemistry
- One or two semesters of Mathematics

*For school specific, up-to-date information, consult the U.S. Veterinary Medical Colleges website at <http://www.aavmc.org>.*

You should start taking your pre-requisite courses as soon as you decide to apply for veterinary school. Some of the upper level classes require that the 100- and 200- level courses be completed as pre-requisites. Normally, it will take you at least 6 semesters to finish the sequence of science classes you will need. Make sure to get the list of required courses for each school where you think you might apply, so you can work all of your requirements into your graduation plan while it is still feasible to do so. Some

Careful planning at the beginning of your four years of college will help to ensure that you are able to finish your pre-veterinary coursework in a timely manner, and take other courses that are of interest to you.

### *Grades*

A strong candidate for veterinary school has an overall GPA of 3.6 or higher with at least that GPA in the pre-requisite coursework. Many schools will not accept pre-requisite coursework in which the grade is lower than a C-. There is a lot of student angst concerning GPAs and admissions standards. While it is true that grades do not tell the entire story about an applicant, they are an important tool for admissions committees to assess your potential success as a veterinary school. Aim for a 3.8 or higher, if possible, with high grades in all of your pre-requisite courses. If you are having trouble in a particular class, get help as soon as you realize you need it. While a single poor grade can be explained, a trend of low grades signals to an admissions committee that you may not have the academic perseverance or skill needed to succeed in veterinary school.

### *Extra-curricular activities and pre-veterinary animal experience*

During your four years of undergraduate education, you should accumulate at least 400-600 hours of pre-professional veterinary medical experience through employment, volunteering, internships and participation in research. Veterinary schools will evaluate not only the amount of time you have spent, but the depth, breadth and quality of the experiences you have had. Vary your experiences by working with a range of animals including companion animals, livestock, lab animals, zoo animals and wildlife. To the extent you are able, try to work directly with veterinarians to learn more about the field and to cultivate potential references for your application. Additionally, try to attain high quality experiences that allow you to participate in a research project or work on a project semi-independently to be able to demonstrate your skills, maturity and responsibility. It might be useful to keep a journal of the different experiences you have, what you have learned and your mentors to keep as a reference when you prepare your application. Finally, in selecting extra-curricular activities, note that it is better to show a long-term commitment to a few endeavors rather than short-term participation in many activities.

### *References*

All veterinary schools will require two or three people to write letters of reference on your behalf. Typically, these references are professors, veterinarians for whom you have worked, and sometimes academic deans or other administrators. Veterinary schools want to know:

Have you carefully considered why you want to go to veterinary school?

Are you likely to do well in veterinary school?

Do you possess the qualities of a good veterinarian?

Do you have something to contribute to the veterinary school?

Do you have something to contribute to the veterinary profession and society in general?

Getting a good recommendation is not just a question of asking someone for a reference. Recommenders will need time to get to know you so that they can write a personalized letter that comments favorably about your intellectual abilities, creativity, motivation to become a veterinarian and the possible impacts you will have once you are in practice. Cultivating relationships with potential references should start as soon as you know that you want to go to veterinary school. While you should strive to do your best at any endeavor, you should go out of your way to excel in courses, internships and jobs that may lead to a reference.

### *Standardized Test Scores*

Applicants to veterinary school take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE, [www.ets.org/gre](http://www.ets.org/gre)), a standardized admissions test common for graduate school and some professional schools. It is best to sit the exam for the first time in your junior year so that you have the opportunity to take it again if your scores are not satisfactory. In addition to the general exam, some veterinary schools will require you to take a subject area exam, so pay attention to specific application requirements. Given the amount of weight standardized test scores have on your application, it is wise to study for the GRE and take several practice exams prior to sitting the actual exam. If you are returning to school or have taken the GRE several years ago for another program, be careful to note the cut off date for accepting "old" GRE scores. The general guideline is that schools will not accept scores that are more than five years old by October 1<sup>st</sup> of the year of application. Be sure to check this requirement with the schools that are of interest to you.

Finally, a few colleges of veterinary medicine require you to take the biology subject matter test in addition to the general GRE exam. This exam is given three times per year in November, December and April, so be sure to plan accordingly if you are

applying to a school that requires this additional exam. Also, please note that the biology subject test is broad in scope, and it best taken after completion of the majority, if not all, of the pre-veterinary science courses.

### *Personal Statement and application essays*

The personal essays are a chance for you to stand out from the hundreds of other applicants being considered. In addition to the personal statement on the common veterinary school application form used by 27 of the 28 schools, many schools require supplemental applications that will require further essay writing. If your GRE scores or grades are borderline, your essays may be your chance to interest the admissions committee enough to earn you an interview. Additionally, many of the interview questions will be based on the content of your essays. This is your chance to address any problem areas in your application, demonstrate that you will be a successful student, a good doctor and a contributor to the veterinary profession, and have something unique to add.

Craft your personal statement to address the following questions:

#### *Who are you and why are you special?*

What is your background? What have you done in life so far? Is there anything that makes you unique? What accomplishments do you have? What challenges have you overcome to get where you are? What are your values and how have you demonstrated them in the past? Are you a leader? an innovator? a teacher? a counselor? Do you have experience with people from different social, economic and religious backgrounds? What has that taught you?

#### *Why do you want to be a veterinarian?*

Even if you have wanted to be a veterinarian since the day you learned what the word meant, avoid using phrases such as “I have known all of my life that I have wanted to be a veterinarian.” Instead, talk about specific experiences that drew you to the profession, what you have done to learn more about veterinary medicine, and the specific goals you have set for yourself once you have graduated. Discuss other careers you have considered and why veterinary medicine is the best career for you. Talk about how your past experiences have helped to shape your interests. Demonstrate a passion for animals, people, science, medicine and society, and show the admissions committees that you have something to add to their schools, the veterinary profession and animals and society. Be sincere and specific in your response.

#### *What have you done to prepare yourself for veterinary school and the veterinary profession?*

In this part of your essay, discuss the formal and informal experiences (working, volunteering, internships and the like) that have shaped your views and driven you to go to veterinary school. Share with the committee the ways in which your experiences have broadened your understanding of the practice of veterinary medicine and the challenges in the profession. Talk about specific skills you have acquired and how they will help you to reach the goals you laid out for yourself.

#### *Why this veterinary school?*

Somewhere in your supplemental application essays, take some time to consider the particular strengths and programs at each school where you apply. Make it a point to personalize your application by showing the admissions committee that you have done your research and you can point out why you want to go to their school. Comment on why you would fit in with that school's student body, teaching styles and overall mission and programs.

#### *What makes you stand out from other applicants?*

This may be a separate section of your essay or a theme that you weave throughout the entire piece. Make sure that your readers come away from your essay knowing that you are not just another applicant, you are somebody special who should be recruited to the school. Your essay is your biggest marketing tool, so use it as such.

### *Other important considerations*

All veterinarians, regardless of where they work, benefit from strong written and verbal communication skills; knowledge and skills are useless unless the need for them and their worth can be communicated to others. Furthermore, anyone wishing to go into private clinical practice would benefit from business training. An animal hospital is a small business, and like all businesses, must be well-managed to succeed. Increasingly, the veterinary schools are looking for applicants with business skills in addition to strong communication skills. Veterinary schools have realized the benefit of communication and business training for pre-veterinary and veterinary students, and will value such knowledge in your application.

Beyond the academic potential of potential students, veterinary schools are looking for students who demonstrate leadership, compassion, a commitment to community service, effective interpersonal skills, a strong sense of personal and professional ethics, and maturity. These are qualities that you should cultivate throughout your education regardless of your major, and that you should convey through your personal statement, references, personal interview (if invited) and whenever you interact with representatives from the school. Ultimately, there are many qualified applicants for veterinary school each year, and it is those students who distinguish themselves above their academic qualifications who are selected for admission.

## Choosing a veterinary school

### *Factors to consider*

Regardless of which of the US veterinary schools you attend, you will get an excellent education. That being said, different schools may have particular programs or core strengths that are appealing to you. It is a good idea to apply to your in-state school, as you will have the most chance for success in getting accepted there. As you look to fill out your list of other potential schools, consider the following questions:

Are there particular programs (such as wildlife conservation, lab animal research, large animal nutrition) at the school that interest you? These could be either joint degree programs or areas with special classes or certificate tracts you could take?

Is there a particular area of the country that appeals to you? Is there a city where your spouse or significant other is more likely to find a job while you are in school? Is there a particular area of veterinary medicine that is more suited to a particular region of the world (e.g. marine mammal medicine in a coastal state, food animal medicine in a mid-west state).

Is there a particular approach to education that appeals to you such as tracking, non-tracking, problem based learning, tradition course work, distance or on-line classes, experiential learning?

Are there particular animal use standards that you consider important? What are the policies at the schools where you are applying? For example, would you be willing to participate in terminal-surgery labs as part of your education?

Do any of the schools have scholarship or fellowship programs that they offer? Would you qualify? You will not know for sure if you will get scholarship money until after you are accepted to school, so this will be a point to be revisited.

Can you realistically afford a veterinary education at that school? For more on planning your veterinary school expenses, please see the appendix to this guide.

### *Listing of the US Colleges of Veterinary Medicine*

#### **ALABAMA**

##### **Auburn University**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
104 J. E. Greene Hall  
Auburn University, AL 36849-5517  
(334) 844-4546  
<http://www.vetmed.auburn.edu>

##### **Tuskegee University**

School of Veterinary Medicine  
Tuskegee, AL 36088  
(334) 727-8174  
<http://tuskegee.edu>

#### **CALIFORNIA**

##### **University of California**

School of Veterinary Medicine  
Davis, CA 95616-8734  
(530) 752-1360  
<http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu>

##### **Western University**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
309 E Second Street - College Plaza  
Pomona, CA, 91766-1854  
(909) 469-5628  
<http://www.westernu.edu/veterinary-about>

#### **COLORADO**

##### **Colorado State University**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
and Biomedical Sciences  
Fort Collins, CO 80523-1601  
(970) 491-7051  
<http://www.cvmb.colostate.edu>

#### **FLORIDA**

##### **University of Florida**

College of Veterinary Medicine,  
PO Box 100125  
Gainesville, FL 32610-0125  
(352) 392-2213  
<http://www.vetmed.ufl.edu>

**GEORGIA****University of Georgia**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
Athens, GA 30602  
(706) 542-3461  
<http://www.vet.uga.edu>

**ILLINOIS****University of Illinois**

College of Veterinary Medicine,  
2001 South Lincoln Avenue  
Urbana, IL 61802  
(217) 333-2760  
<http://www.cvm.uiuc.edu>

**INDIANA****Purdue University**

School of Veterinary Medicine,  
1240 Lynn Hall  
West Lafayette, IN 47907-1240  
(765) 494-7607  
<http://www.vet.purdue.edu>

**IOWA****Iowa State University**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
Ames, IA 50011  
(515) 294-1242  
<http://www.vetmed.iastate.edu>

**KANSAS****Kansas State University**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
Manhattan, KS 66506  
(785) 532-5660  
<http://www.vet.ksu.edu>

**LOUISIANA****Louisiana State University**

School of Veterinary Medicine  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803-8402  
(225) 578-9900  
<http://www.vetmed.lsu.edu>

**MASSACHUSETTS****Tufts University**

School of Veterinary Medicine  
200 Westboro Road  
North Grafton, MA 01536  
(508) 839-5302  
<http://www.tufts.edu/vet>

**MICHIGAN****Michigan State University**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
G-100 Veterinary Medical Center  
East Lansing, MI 48824-1314  
(517) 355-6509  
<http://cvm.msu.edu>

**MINNESOTA****The University of Minnesota**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
1365 Gortner Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55108  
(612) 624-9227  
<http://www.cvm.umn.edu>

**MISSISSIPPI****Mississippi State University**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
(662) 325-3432  
<http://www.cvm.msstate.edu>

**MISSOURI****University of Missouri-Columbia**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
Columbia, MO 65211  
(573) 882-3877  
<http://www.cvm.missouri.edu>

**NEW YORK****Cornell University**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
Ithaca, NY 14853-6401  
(607) 253-3700  
<http://www.vet.cornell.edu>

**NORTH CAROLINA****North Carolina State University**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
4700 Hillsborough Street  
Raleigh, NC 27606  
(919) 513-6210  
<http://www.cvm.ncsu.edu/>

**OHIO****The Ohio State University**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
1900 Coffey Road  
Columbus, OH 43210-1092  
(614) 292-1171  
<http://www.vet.ohio-state.edu>

**OKLAHOMA****Oklahoma State University**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
Stillwater, OK 74078  
(405) 744-6595  
<http://www.cvm.okstate.edu>

**OREGON****Oregon State University**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
Corvallis, OR 97331  
(541) 737-2098  
<http://www.vet.orst.edu>

**PENNSYLVANIA****University of Pennsylvania**

School of Veterinary Medicine  
3800 Spruce Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6044  
(215) 898-5438  
<http://www.vet.upenn.edu>

**TENNESSEE****University of Tennessee**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
2407 River Drive  
Knoxville, TN 37996  
(865) 974-7262  
<http://www.vet.utk.edu>

**TEXAS****Texas A&M University**

College of Veterinary Medicine &  
Biomedical Sciences  
College Station, TX 77843-4461  
(979) 845-5051  
<http://www.cvm.tamu.edu>

**VIRGINIA****Virginia Tech**

Virginia-Maryland Regional  
College of Veterinary Medicine  
Blacksburg, VA 24061-0442  
(540) 231-7666  
<http://www.vetmed.vt.edu>

**WASHINGTON****Washington State University**

College of Veterinary Medicine  
Pullman, WA 99164-7010  
(509) 335-9515  
<http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu>

## **WISCONSIN**

### **University of Wisconsin-Madison**

School of Veterinary Medicine  
2015 Linden Drive West  
Madison, WI 53706-1102  
(608) 263-6716  
<http://www.vetmed.wisc.edu>

### *Foreign Colleges of Veterinary Medicine*

Many countries have colleges of veterinary medicine, but that does not ensure that the degree they grant will be recognized in the United States when you apply to take the national licensure exam, known as the North American Veterinary Licensure Exam (NAVLE). In choosing to attend a veterinary school abroad, it is important to know if that school is accredited by the AVMA's Council on Education (AVMA COE), an affiliate of the AVMA COE, or not recognized. The AVMA's COE accreditation program is a voluntary, non-governmental review of a school to ensure that the education and facilities are of equivalent high quality to US schools. If you obtain a DVM degree from a fully-accredited school abroad, it will be recognized in the US and allow you to obtain a veterinary license in the same manner as graduates from US schools. If, on the other hand, you graduate from a non-accredited veterinary school, you will have to first obtain a certificate of eligibility to take the NAVLE exam and obtain licensure in this country. Currently, there are two routes for US citizens trained at non-accredited schools abroad to obtain a certificate of eligibility for the NAVLE exam:

- In all states, the AVMA's program is recognized: <http://www.avma.org/education/ecfvg/default.asp>
- In 34 states, the alternative PAVE program is also recognized: <http://www.aavsb.org/PAVE>

If you plan to apply to a foreign veterinary school, make sure to fully understand the additional training and licensure requirements you will have once you return to the US to practice.

*Caribbean and Mexican Veterinary Schools (note: Not all are AVMA COE accredited)*

## **ANTIGUA**

### **American University of Antigua**

**College of Medicine**  
College of Veterinary Medicine- Kasturba Medical College  
International Center  
c/o GCLR, LLC  
2 Wall Street, 10th Floor New York, N.Y. 10005  
(212) 661-8899  
<http://www.auamed.org/vetschool>

## **CAYMAN ISLANDS**

### **St. Matthews University**

United States Administrative Offices  
St. Matthew's University  
12124 High Tech Avenue  
Suite 350  
Orlando, Florida 32817  
(407) 488-1742  
<http://www.stmatthews.edu/school-of-veterinary-medicine.shtml>

## **GRENADA**

### **St. George's University (Accredited)**

Office of Admission  
St. George's University  
c/o The North American Correspondent  
University Support Services, LLC  
One East Main Street  
Bay Shore, NY 11706-8399  
1 (800) 899-6337 ext. 9 218  
<http://www.sgu.edu>

## **MEXICO**

### **Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México (Accredited)**

Coyoacan, Mexico, D.F.  
Phone: 52 (55) 5622 5855  
<http://www.fmvz.unam.mx>

## **ST. KITTS**

### **Ross University (Accredited)**

US Admissions  
630 US Highway 1,  
North Brunswick, NJ 08902  
877-ROSS-EDU  
<http://www.rossu.edu>

*Canadian Veterinary Schools (All are AVMA COE Accredited)*

**University of Calgary**

UCVM Admissions  
TRW 2D03, 3280 Hospital Drive NW  
Calgary, AB T2N 4Z6  
CANADA  
(403) 220-8699  
<http://www.vet.ucalgary.ca>

**University of Guelph**

Admissions, Office of the Registrar  
University Centre, Level 3  
University of Guelph  
Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1  
CANADA  
(519) 824-4120, x6062  
<http://www.uoguelph.ca>

**Universite de Montreal-Quebec**

Service des Admissions  
Universite de Montreal  
C.P. 6205  
Succursale Centre-Ville  
Montreal, Quebec H3C 3T5  
CANADA  
Telephone: (514) 343-7076  
<http://www.medvet.umontreal.ca/index.html>

*AVMA COE Accredited Veterinary Schools in Europe*

**SCOTLAND**

**University of Edinburgh**

Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies  
Easter Bush  
Midlothian EH25 9RG  
SCOTLAND  
+44(0)131 651 7305  
<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/vet>

**University of Glasgow**

Recruitment and International Office  
The Fraser Building  
University of Glasgow  
Glasgow G12 8QQ  
SCOTLAND  
+44 (0)141 330 6062  
<http://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/vet>

**University of Prince Edward Island**

Registrar's Office  
Atlantic Veterinary College  
University of Prince Edward Island  
550 University Ave.  
Charlottetown, PEI C1A 4P3  
CANADA  
(902) 566-0608  
<http://www.upei.ca/avc>

**University of Saskatchewan**

Admissions Office  
Western College of Veterinary Medicine  
52 Campus Drive  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, SK S7N 5B4  
(306) 966-7448  
<http://www.usask.ca/wcvm>

**ENGLAND**

**Royal Veterinary College London**

Admissions, RVC  
Royal College Street  
London NW1 0TU  
ENGLAND  
+44 (0)20 7468 5147  
<http://www.rvc.ac.uk>

**IRELAND**

**University College Dublin**

UCD Veterinary Sciences Centre,  
University College Dublin  
Belfield, Dublin 4  
IRELAND  
+ 353 1 716 6100  
<http://www.ucd.ie/vetmed>

## **THE NETHERLANDS**

### **State University of Utrecht**

3508 TD Utrecht, The Netherlands

Phone: 31 30 253 4851

<http://www.uu.nl/NL/faculteiten/diergeneeskunde/Pages/default.aspx>

*AVMA COE Accredited Veterinary Schools in Australia and New Zealand*

## **AUSTRALIA**

### **Murdoch University**

Division of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences

90 South Street

Murdoch

Western Australia 6150

AUSTRALIA

+61 (03) 9627 4809

<http://www.vetbiomed.murdoch.edu.au>

### **University of Sydney**

International Office

Level 4, Jane Foss Russell Building (G02)

The University of Sydney

NSW 2006

AUSTRALIA

Domestic free call: 1800 899 376

+61 2 9351 2222

<http://sydney.edu.au/vetscience>

### **University of Melbourne**

The Faculty of Veterinary Science

Corner Park Drive and Flemington Road

Parkville Victoria 3052

AUSTRALIA

+61 3 8344 7357

<http://www.vet.unimelb.edu.au>

## **NEW ZEALAND**

### **Massey University**

International Students' Office

Massey University

Private Bag 11 222

Palmerston North 4442

NEW ZEALAND

+64 6 350 5701

<http://vet-school.massey.ac.nz>

## **Choosing a major**

Do you need to be an animal sciences major to be successful in applying to veterinary school? No! While all successful veterinary school applicants must complete the prescribed list of pre-requisite courses at the schools where they apply, there is no requirement or preference for biology or animal sciences majors. As you select your major, choose one that reflects your interests and strengths. Consider that if you do not get into veterinary school, your major will help you to find an alternative educational or job path. You will be a strong candidate for veterinary school if you have completed all of your pre-requisite coursework, maintained a high GPA, and demonstrated a sincere and well-informed interest in veterinary medicine. Schools are more interested in the scope and diversity of your curriculum than completion of a particular major area of study.

## **Early admission**

There is an option for early admissions for students enrolled in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Students in the third year may apply during the fall semester provided that by the end of that year, and before matriculating at a veterinary school, they will have completed 90 credits of undergraduate work, including all pre-requisites for veterinary school and UMD's CORE requirements, and any other university obligations. The first 30 hours of veterinary school credit will count toward the completion of the UMD undergraduate degree. Additional information about this option can be found in the undergraduate course catalogue.

Please note that very few students are successful in applying to veterinary school during the third year. You will be much more prepared for veterinary school, and have a better foundation for it if you complete your undergraduate degree prior to starting professional school.

## Veterinary school and your spouse and family

Veterinary school is an intense experience, and it will require you to spend long hours in class, on rotations, and studying. You will be under a considerable amount of stress, and have very little free time to spend with your spouse and family. This can be a hard adjustment not only for you, but for the people who are close to you. Spend some time talking with your spouse (and children) about what veterinary school will be like and make the decision to attend as a family. Read some of the on-line forums and blogs about the spouse's perspective on veterinary school so that it is not a "shock to the system" for both of you when you get there.

## Budget

According to the 2012 statistics published by the AVMA, the average student debt load for those students who took on debt to pay for school (about 89% of all students) at graduation was \$151,672. Payable over 10 years at a fixed annual rate of 6.8 percent, the repayment on a loan of that amount comes to \$1,745.45 a month. According to that same survey, the mean starting salary for a new graduate veterinarian not going on for further training in an internship or residency is \$66,469 per year. After federal, state and local taxes, this typically amounts to a monthly net take-home pay of about \$3000. While this sounds like a lot, it really is not, especially when more than half of that \$3000 will be going to pay for student loan debt. At the end of this guide, there is a budget planning worksheet to help you assess how much debt you can afford to take to pay for veterinary school. You may find that you will need to work for a few years prior to attending to offset the costs of school. It is better to figure this out now than after you graduate and those loans come due!

## Options after veterinary school

After your four years of school, and upon passing the veterinary board exam (the NAVLE), you have the following options:

1. Go directly in to general practice. For those wishing to be general practitioners, the option is available to start practicing immediately upon graduation. It is best to find a clinic where there is a good mentoring program in place, and that practices high-quality medicine.
2. Complete a one-year internship program and then go into general practice. The additional year of clinical training will help solidify your skills as a clinician and give you additional exposure to challenging medicine and surgery cases with a certain subset of species.
3. Complete a one-year internship program and then go into a clinical residency program in areas such as internal medicine, surgery, cardiology, dermatology, neurology, nutrition, clinical or anatomic pathology, ophthalmology, dentistry, small animal exotics medicine, radiology, oncology or other specialty fields.
4. Complete an advanced degree in a related field such as an MPH, MS or PhD in areas such as comparative medicine, animals and public policy, pathology, immunology, conservation medicine, or any number of other related disciplines.
5. Complete a fellowship program or other short-term experience program towards your career goals.

### Some thoughts on being a good doctor: it starts now.

We all know a good doctor when we meet one. She is devoted to her profession, caring and up-to-date on the latest innovations in medicine. He is vigilant and progressive and genuinely interested in the health and well-being of his patients. Some of the qualities you should seek to cultivate in yourself to be a good doctor go far beyond academic ability. Veterinary medicine is a noble profession. Beyond courses, grades and test scores, admissions committee members want to accept candidates who've demonstrated that they will be upstanding members of the veterinary community. Start thinking about how you demonstrate:

- Enthusiasm for the profession tempered by realism of its limitations
- Honesty, integrity and sincerity in every aspect of work and life
- The ability to understand what your clients are trying to tell you, and to appreciate their interests, motivations, fears and misunderstandings.
- Maturity and professionalism
- Empathy for clients, colleagues and staff
- Warmth and compassion towards people and animals alike
- An abundance of patience (and patients!)
- The ability to communicate a clear message that is appropriate to the receiver
- A sense of humor
- Lots of energy and the ability to persevere
- Creativity, innovation and problem solving skills
- Fascination with medicine and desire to always learn more
- The ability to make hard decisions when needed
- Confidence tempered by humility
- A lack of cynicism or arrogance
- Awareness of the roles of animals in our society, and the many influences of science, society, politics, religion and education on our dealings with animals.
- The ability to let go of challenging medical decisions and tough emotional cases at the end of the day
- A sense of social responsibility and a life-long commitment to serve others
- Dedication to getting the job done through hard work and perseverance, knowing that this will sometimes come at a cost to your free time, personal obligations and family.

### Some advice from current veterinarians

While writing this guide, I polled veterinarians from my school and with whom I have worked in the region over the last 5 years. Here is the advice that they had for future veterinary students:

-“College is the place for you to take courses in a range of subjects to see what you really like and where you really excel. Don't get locked into an all science curriculum only to discover in your senior year that you really love history or that you would like to consider a career in law. Especially in your first two years, broaden yourself and take a variety of classes. You will be a more interesting person for it, you will have a better perspective on life and you will be sure that you are making the right choice.”

-“Be prepared to be in debt, and be prepared to be overworked and underappreciated. If you can deal with all that and still find your profession awesome, then you are good to go. I also recommend working in every position in a practice (kennel, tech, receptionist) and get lots of experience. I personally think it is better to work for a couple of years before going to get a practical perspective.”

-“I may add underpaid to that list and don't say you don't care when you can't afford what life has to offer (because you are paying off your loans).”

-“Love what you do or do something else. Veterinary school is a long, hard, expensive road, so make sure you should be on it. If so, you will love the destination.”

-“If I had known how much my debt was going to be a burden to me and my family, I would not have gone to veterinary school.”

-“I love my job.”

-Almost every vet who responded to my query wrote back “Think carefully about the sacrifice you are about to make.” The gist of their comments was that vet school is tough stuff, and that the veterinary profession is not always as glamorous as it may seem from the outside. Know what you are getting into.

**Plan for your four years at UMD and your veterinary school application**

	<b>Freshman</b>	<b>Sophomore</b>	<b>Junior</b>	<b>Senior</b>
<b>Academics</b>	*Outline a four year graduation plan and review it during your advising sessions.	*Wrap up general education courses. *Review your graduation plan, major requirements and pre-requisites to make sure you are on track to graduate on time.	*Review your graduation plan, major requirements and pre-requisites to make sure you are on track to graduate on time.	*Make sure that all course work for your major is complete and that you are set to graduate on-time.
<b>Experiences</b>	*Join the pre-veterinary club. *Research a volunteer opportunity and take part in it. *Find a job or internship working with animals. *Start a journal of your animal related experiences.	*Continue in the pre-vet club. *Continue volunteering. *Find a job or internship that allows you to work with animals. Remember to have a variety of animal experiences on your resume. *Continue to update your journal of your animal related experiences.	*Continue in the pre-vet club. *Continue volunteering. *Find a job or internship that allows you to work with animals. Remember to have a variety of animal experiences on your resume. *Continue to update your journal of your animal related experiences.	*Continue in the pre-vet club. *Continue volunteering, interning and working with animals. *Continue to update your journal of your animal related experiences.
<b>Preparation</b>	*Read this guide in its entirety! *Evaluate your professional interests, personal strengths and career choices. *Do some veterinary career information searching to understand the range of careers for vets.	*Start to research the veterinary schools to which you wish to apply. Narrow down your list to 5 schools so that you can focus on them. Make sure you are on-track to meet all of their admission requirements.	*Re-evaluate your professional interests, personal strengths and career choices. *Consider a GRE prep course or study book. *Visit the veterinary schools to which you want to apply.	*Attend a session on interviewing; Practice mock-interviews. *Create a tracking spreadsheet to make sure that all of your applications and their supporting materials are submitted on-time.
<b>Application</b>	*Make a list of 10 schools where you think you might want to apply and list all of the coursework requirements for each school in one place.	*Get to know at least two professors who could serve as good references for you. This involves more than just taking their courses.	*Solidify relationships with at least two professors who will serve as references for you. *Begin writing your personal statement.	*Apply to schools starting in June after your junior year! *Make sure that transcripts, reference letters and supporting materials are sent.
<b>Advising</b>	*Discuss your career goals with your professors, family, and advisors. Start talking to veterinarians working in areas that interest you about their experiences.	*Check in with your advisor to make sure you are on-track.	*Make sure you are working carefully to solidify you application and set in place your schedule for applying to schools and graduating on-time. Talk to Dr. Valerie Regan at the College Park campus of VMRCVM.	
<b>Life</b>	*Take a class that interests you outside of the sciences. *Exercise regularly. *Sleep 8 hours per day. *Try something new each week. *Build a network of close friends. *Volunteer *Learn a new skill *Get to know your parents as adults. *Smile and relax			

**Budget planning worksheet**

<b>Table 1: What debts do I currently have?</b>	Current amount	Interest rate?	Debt anticipated at graduation
Federal student loans (deferred while in school)			
Subsidized			
Unsubsidized			
Private student loans (payable while in vet school)			
Car Loan			
Mortgage			
Credit card debt			
Other private loan or outstanding debts			
<b>TOTAL DEBTS</b>			

<b>Table 2: How much will veterinary school cost per year?</b>	Yearly amount	Total for the 4 years
Tuition (tends to increase each year)		
Fees/Books/Supplies		
Board exams, special programs, other fees		
<b>TOTAL COST OF VETERINARY EDUCATION</b>		

<b>Table 3: What will my other expenses be during veterinary school?</b>	Monthly amount	Yearly amount	Total for the 4 years
Private Student loan repayment (undergrad)			
Car payment, parking, gas, tolls, repairs			
Credit card debt (outstanding debt to pay off)			
Other private loan payments			
Travel (plane/train/bus to and from home, other)			
Housing (rent or mortgage, insurance, repairs, etc)			
Utilities			
Food			
Dental insurance and dental care			
Health insurance and health care			
Rx and OTC medications			
Pet Care			
Cell phone and internet			
Clothing/shoes/haircuts/etc.			
Entertainment			
Other:			
<b>TOTAL LIVING EXPENSES</b>			

<b>Table 4: What will be my total financial burden for the 4 years of veterinary school?</b>	Yearly amount	Total for the 4 years
Total cost of veterinary education (from table 2)		
Total living expenses (from table 3)		
<b>TOTAL FINANCIAL BURDEN DURING VET SCHOOL</b>		

<b>Table 5: What resources do I have to pay for veterinary school, my other debts, and the cost of living?</b>	Yearly amount	Total for the 4 years
Personal savings		
Expected contributions from parents, family		
Scholarships		
Part-time job during the year (no more than 10hr/wk)		
Summer job (after 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> year only)		
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES</b>		

<b>Table 6: How much in loans and other repayable grants will I need to pay for veterinary school?</b>	Yearly amount	Interest rate?	Total for the 4 years
<b>Total Financial Burden for Vet School (table 4)</b>		-----	
<b>Total Resources to pay for Vet School (table 5)</b>		-----	
<b>Difference (i.e. Amount that will be needed in loans)</b>		-----	
Federal Subsidized			
Unsubsidized (will increase during school)			
Private			
Other (family loan, etc)			

<b>Table 7: What will my debt-load be when I graduate from veterinary school?</b>	Total amount anticipated	Interest rate?	Monthly debt payments once out of school
Total Federal student loans (undergrad):	-----	-----	-----
Subsidized			
Unsubsidized (will increase during school)			
Private student loans (undergrad)			
Car Loan (if not paid off)			
Mortgage			
Credit card debt (if not paid off)			
Other remaining private loans or outstanding debts (undergrad)			
Total federal students loans (vet school)			
Total private loans (vet school)			
Total other debts (vet school)			
<b>TOTAL DEBTS TO REPAY AFTER VET SCHOOL</b>			

New graduates can expect to make about \$60-65,000 per year. After federal, state and local taxes, this typically amounts to a monthly net take-home pay of about \$3500. The monthly payment for a student loan debt of \$120,000 paid over 10 years at 6.8 percent annual interest is about \$1380. Can you afford it?

Calculate your monthly take-home pay for different salary levels

<http://www.payroll-taxes.com/calculators.htm>

Calculate your monthly student loan payment

<http://www.finaid.org/calculators/loanpayments.phtml>

### **Tips for a successful four years of college study (no matter where you go next)**

1. Start your courses off right. Prior to the first day of class, get a copy of your course syllabus (usually on-line at ELMS) and read your first few chapters' worth of material. Look for any scheduling problems on the syllabus and address them early.
2. Maintain your health by eating well, exercising and spending time with your friends. Learn how to avoid the seasonal colds and flu that go around school through proper hand-washing, good sanitation, and some common sense. Get a full night of sleep every night, especially before a test.
3. Prepare for each class by reading the relevant material in its entirety prior to the lecture. Professors expect students to be prepared for class and teach to that level. Furthermore, the lectures will make more sense and you will be able to ask good questions if you come prepared.
4. Go to class! This is your opportunity to see the material again, ask questions, get to know your professors and classmates and learn something. Don't waste your money sleeping through your education.
5. Make the most out of class sessions by taking good notes, asking questions and talking to fellow students. Review and organize your notes each night while the material is fresh in your head.
6. Learn how to learn. It is not up to your professors to spoon feed you every piece of information or fill-in the big picture for you. Rather, a good professor presents a significant body of information and guides students toward more sophisticated comprehension of the subject as more than a collection of facts. A significant part of your success in any discipline will come from your ability to evaluate information, make conclusions about it, draw analogies between what you are learning and other coursework, and to apply what you have learned to novel situations.. Look up questions that you don't know. Challenge yourself to relate what you are learning to other chapters, other courses in and beyond the department, and to life in general. This is the different between an A student and a B student.
7. Use office hours, TAs, academic success centers and other supplemental resources. Seek out help as soon as you know you need it. Most courses build on themselves, so a lack of understanding only becomes compounded as the semester progresses.
8. Plan on devoting an average of at least two hours of good study time outside of class for each hour spent in class.
9. Break up your study of a particular subject into 1-2 hour sessions rather than long runs of studying. Studies have shown that you learn and retain more when you encounter the material in several small sessions rather than cramming all at once.
10. Additionally, break down large assignments such as term papers and projects into smaller tasks. The assignments will seem less daunting, you will have time to research useful articles, books, and digital resources. This practice will also give you insulation against unexpected illnesses or family emergencies. Finally, it is far less stressful at the end of term to have a little bit of work to do on several projects, than cramming to get them all finished simultaneously.
11. Stay organized. Keep your notes in a single place in chronological order along with any hand-outs, articles or other supplemental materials from the course. Keep a paper or on-line planner to help you keep all of your tests, due dates, extra-curricular commitments and personal dates in order.
12. When you are preparing for a test, ask yourself what questions you would ask if you were writing the test. Try to identify key concepts and overarching themes as a means of organizing your studying efforts. It is important to see the big picture and the relationships in what you are learning as a framework for the details you have to memorize.
13. Study with a study group! Often, other students will key in on different areas than you. A good study group can be a great place of learning and support. That said, always do your own homework and make sure that you fully understand everything the group is learning. Don't stay in groups that waste a lot of time chatting or goofing around. A little bit of humor helps studying go smoothing, but a lot of goofing around is just a waste of study time.

14. Learn from your failures and do better next time. Don't dwell on a low test score or a bad paper grade. Talk to the professor or course TA about your performance, develop a plan to improve and move on. On a similar note, don't let one disappointing test score undermine your performance in an entire class, and don't let a disappointing grade in one course undermine your performance in other classes. If you are not doing well in a class, it is better to have a W on your transcript than an F, so pay attention to the add/drop and withdrawal deadlines.

15. Don't forget to have some fun. Balance your academic work with recreation, community service and maintaining your close friendships. Talk to your parents often- they will give you the best advice and support, even if they nag a little

16. It's great to work, but limit your work hours to no more than 15 hours per week. Try to find a position with flexible work hours and a short commute. Typically, on-campus jobs are more accommodating to student needs than jobs off campus.

## Internet Resources

Cornell Pre-Veterinary Newsletters

<http://www.vet.cornell.edu/admissions/PreVetNewsletters.cfm>

Explore Health Careers On-line

<http://www.explorehealthcareers.org/en/index.aspx>

Your Application Profile: A Self Assessment (From Colorado Veterinary School)

<http://www.colorado.edu/aac/prevetself.pdf>

Pre-veterinary Student Forum

<http://forums.about.com/n/pfx/forum.aspx?webtag=ab-vetmedicine2>

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)

[www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org)

The Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC)

<http://www.aavmc.org>

Veterinary Medical College Application Service (VMCAS)

<http://aavmc.org/vmcas/vmcas.htm>

The Graduate Record Exam (GRE)

<http://www.ets.org/gre>

The Student-Doctor Network (advice, forums, articles)

<http://www.studentdoctor.net/category/veterinary>

The Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine

<http://www.vetmed.vt.edu>