

APPLICATIONS FOR VETERINARY MEDICINE: FAQs

So you've decided to apply for veterinary medicine, but what do you need to do? How do you apply? And what happens if you don't get in? We've compiled some answers to our most frequently asked questions.

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WORK EXPERIENCE

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What kind of experience do I need?

- Most courses look for evidence that you have a passionate interest in veterinary medicine/science, so get any experience you can which brings you into contact with animals and, where possible, their owners.
- It's not compulsory to shadow a veterinary surgeon. Think about observing veterinary nurses; farm workers; animal welfare officers; wildlife assistants and zookeepers as well.
- Always check if the course has a minimum requirement.
- Lots of applicants for veterinary medicine get voluntary experience with people in animal care settings, or undertake part-time roles. Voluntary work, e.g. with the RSPCA or PDSA, will bring you into contact with different animals and situations, perhaps working with owners who are anxious about their animal's welfare, which will teach you the 'interpersonal skills' you'll need in the role.

- All veterinary students in the UK are required to undertake an additional 12 weeks of Extra Mural Studies (EMS) when they are studying veterinary medicine.

Sign up with the Union Society's volunteer bureau, SCAN, or see our [volunteering web pages](#).

How do I get experience for veterinary medicine?

- Veterinary surgeons can only offer work shadowing or work experience. They do get inundated with requests and some even have year-long waiting lists! So make sure you let them know when you are applying to study veterinary medicine.
- Placements may only last a few days, as the pressures on staff time mean that they cannot provide the level of supervision to meet demand.
- Be aware that placements can take place in term-time, which may be difficult to fit around your timetable.
- Try to get a wide variety of experiences in different settings (city or rural) as this will increase your knowledge.
- If possible, don't just observe – try to help as much as you are allowed to. Take notes of what you've seen and how this has continued to shape your motivation to become a vet.

I already did experience at school – do I need to do more?

Yes - it helps to show your dedication to the profession. Your experiences need to be up to date and this will also enable you to gain knowledge of a variety of roles and techniques.

Why does it help to have experience of different types of animal care?

You need to think carefully about the kinds of skills required for veterinary medicine. It is particularly important for you to understand what constitutes quality care and to develop your interpersonal (or 'people') skills: listening; empathy; communication.

- Some of the animals that you'll be dealing with will often be at their most vulnerable – frightened or distressed. You need to learn how to respond to them in order to treat them effectively and efficiently, without any injury to yourself!
- You'll also be dealing with different animal owners, those with domestic animals, farm livestock and horses. Each has a different way of viewing the care given to

their animals and how they react to the proposed treatment. This experience will help you to develop your interpersonal skills and be a more effective vet.

- You'll also get to know about the different techniques and technologies used within different situations.

Why do I need to do extra-curricular activities?

Veterinary medicine is a very demanding course, so it's important that you have an outlet from your studies. You don't have to be captain of the hockey team or to have climbed Kilimanjaro, but it helps to have something to talk about in your interview if you're asked.

CHOOSING A COURSE

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How do I choose a course?

You can choose up to four courses for veterinary medicine. There are currently seven universities that offer graduate entry to study veterinary medicine. All seven are accredited by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), but you can also check if they are accredited to other associations, such as the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA). Research the course and find out what the university specialises in, e.g. equine; livestock; research or small animal caseload and consider learning styles (e.g. problem-based learning, intercalated or traditional). Think about the entry requirements; size and location (is the campus situated near the city or will there be more travel costs to consider?), as you'll be living there for at least 4 years, after all!

Think about the cost for the course, as graduates will tend to pay the full fees and this can be anything from £9,000 to over £25,000 per annum!

Can I apply with a 2:2?

All UK veterinary schools will expect you to have a 2:1 or above.

Can I apply if I don't have a science degree?

This depends on each individual course provider. For example, Bristol University has a Pre-Vet Year 0 for students with non-science qualifications. We would recommend that you check the entry requirements for your chosen course(s) to see if this is possible.

Can international students apply?

- It is entirely possible for overseas students to apply for veterinary medicine in the UK - check with individual institutions about their eligibility requirements. However, as an international student, your fees will be rather higher than those who are assessed as 'home' students, e.g. UK/EEA applicants.
- There are some additional considerations including your entry qualifications and English language skills. It is unusual to see any degree which requires an IELTS of less than 7 overall.
- Most universities will not have a full list of international qualifications which they accept for entry onto a UK Veterinary degree. In most circumstances, if your qualification is not listed, you should contact the individual institution directly to check if it is acceptable. Check with the universities for full details of all entry requirements for veterinary medicine.

If I study veterinary medicine overseas, can I still come back and work in the UK?

- Only veterinary surgeons registered as a member of the RCVS can practise veterinary surgery in the UK. Look at the [RCVS website](#) to check which qualifications are recognised.

What's the duration of the course?

- Courses can vary in duration, from 4, 5 or 6 years. Some courses may provide an accelerated course for those with a relevant science degree. Check with the provider if they do and whether you can apply for the accelerated and undergraduate degree course at the same time.

QUALIFICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS TESTS

- [Can I practise the admissions tests?](#)
- [Are bursaries available for the admissions tests?](#)

Can I practise the admissions tests?

- The tests are designed so that you can't really revise for them, but it can help to work through some practice tests online, so that you know what to expect. The BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT) website has a full free practice test available. You can buy books, or even go on courses to practise, but some veterinary schools feel that these courses aren't always value for money.
- You can practise general aptitude tests free – see [Psychometric tests](#), which you might find helpful for certain sections of the admissions test.

Are bursaries available for the admissions tests?

Check with the individual course provider, but it is extremely rare that any of them would offer financial support due to the large number of applicants.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

- [How do I structure my personal statement?](#)
- [How long should it be?](#)
- [Can I get my personal statement checked? How many times? By whom?](#)
- [What does being 'reflective' really mean?](#)
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- [I don't know *why* I want to be a vet, I just *know* I do! What do I say?](#)
- [What are the common mistakes that people make on a personal statement?](#)

How do I structure my personal statement?

Your personal statement should focus on your reasons for applying; how your work experience has prepared you for the course and career; and any supporting information, such as extra-curricular activities. The following link is useful for veterinary medicine:

- [UCAS form](#) - So you want to be a vet?

How long should it be?

47 lines long, or 4000 characters (including spaces). The form will cut you off if you go over the limit. Try to leave space for breaks between paragraphs if possible.

Can I get my personal statement checked? How many times? By whom?

- You can get your personal statement checked by the Careers Service and by your personal tutor, if they're willing. All of the careers advisers have experience of personal statements. The Careers Service does not check your spelling and grammar.
- Please use the drop-in service to get your statement checked. We are normally open from 10am - 4:30pm Monday-Friday, including university holidays. Check our website for details.
- You can show your statement to as many people as are prepared to look at it, though you are likely to get different feedback from everyone that you show it to, which isn't always helpful. **Remember: there is no such thing as a perfect personal statement!**

What does being 'reflective' really mean?

The selectors aren't just interested in *what* you've observed, they want to know what you *learned* from it. What did you learn about good animal care? How did your experiences

challenge your views of the profession? What does this mean for you as a prospective professional?

How can I convey my passion for the subject without being cheesy?

Let the facts speak for themselves! You don't need to wax lyrical about what you've seen, but if you talk clearly and simply about your experiences, this should convey your enthusiasm. Don't say "I have always longed to be a vet", when you could say "I have wanted to be a vet since I was 11, after my experience of...."

I don't know *why* I want to be a vet, I just *know* I do! What do I say?

You'll need to have a good think about this, as it will probably be your first question at interview! Sometimes it can help to ask "why not?". Why a veterinary surgeon and not a veterinary nurse? What is the difference between the roles? What does the first role provide that the second doesn't?

What are the common mistakes that people make on a personal statement?

- Too descriptive. Don't just focus on what you saw, or what you enjoyed; say what you learned from it.
- Too general. Don't just say that the vet's empathy skills really calmed the owner down. What did they do? Was it their tone of voice? Their body language? Don't simply state that the RSPCA team worked together 'dynamically' – how did they work together? Why was it effective?
- Too romantic. This is an easy profession to romanticise! The selector will want to know that you understand the realities of the profession. Words like 'enlightened', 'privileged' and 'longed' are all a bit too romantic for a personal statement.
- Unstructured. Your statement should follow a logical structure, which explains 'this is why I want to pursue this career' and 'this is how I have prepared myself through work experience', ending by explaining your other skills/hobbies/interests.

- [Personal statement](#) – So you want to be a vet?

THE APPLICATION FORM

- [Should I apply as an individual or through the university?](#)
- [How do I add my predicted grades? How do I calculate my predicted grades?](#)
- [Do I add my BMAT score to my qualifications section on the form?](#)
- [Should I include all of my module marks for degree and A-level?](#)
- [I can't find 'Newcastle University' on the drop-down list. What do I do?](#)
- [What is the university's exam centre number?](#)
- [Does my summer placement go in the 'employment' section?](#)
- [What should I put as my 'occupational background'?](#)
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- [Can I have two referees?](#)
- [When do I submit my form?](#)

Should I apply as an individual or through the university?

Either – you're not advantaged either way. If you're applying via the university, you'll need the institution code and buzzword, which is available from the Careers Service.

How do I add my predicted grades? How do I calculate my predicted grades?

You don't need to calculate your predicted grades – your referee will do that for you.

Do I add my BMAT score to my qualifications section on the form?

No, your scores will be sent directly to the university.

Should I include all of my module marks for degree and A-level?

You must enter units/modules for some qualifications, but for others it's optional. In 'Apply', check if there's an asterisk next to (it will be displayed as 'module/unit *'); if there is, you need to add these details. If they're optional, check the 'Entry Profiles' in 'Course Search' to see if universities want your units or module results and add them if they do.

I can't find 'Newcastle University' on the drop-down list. What do I do?

Click 'my school or college is not listed here'. Add the university manually by typing it into the box. Remember that it's 'Newcastle University', not 'University of Newcastle upon Tyne'.

What is the university's exam centre number?

You can leave this blank on the qualifications section, but you do need to add the “awarding organisation”, which is Newcastle University. Ignore the warning message if you have left it blank deliberately - it will disappear once you continue with your application.

Does my summer placement go in the ‘employment’ section?

Yes, if it was paid experience.

What should I put as my ‘occupational background’?

Choose your reply from the drop-down list or enter your own details in the box.

Which fee code do I use?

This really depends on your personal circumstances. Check the UCAS guidelines in the first instance.

Who provides my reference? When?

- It needs to be someone who knows you well and can comment on your suitability for the course. We recommend using your personal tutor, or an academic who knows you well (your dissertation supervisor, for example). You should let your referee know that you want to apply as soon as possible, so that they can start reflecting on the kinds of personal qualities you will bring to the role.
- You should ask your referee for a reference early in the application cycle.
Remember: the start of term is an extremely busy time for academic staff and you are unlikely to be the only person asking them for a reference!
- UCAS needs to receive your form, payment **and** reference before the 15th October. If you submit your form to UCAS on the 14th, it is unlikely that your tutor will be able to add your reference in time.

How do I add a reference to my UCAS form? Does my referee add it?

- **If you apply through the university:** you should complete your form and mark all sections as complete. You then pay your application fee and send your application to your referee online. They then check your application and add your reference, which will be approved by the university and sent back to UCAS. UCAS needs to receive your reference by the 15th October. The process of adding your reference to your application can take some time, so make sure that you submit your UCAS form before the 15th!
- **If you're applying independently** and would like your reference to be written by a registered school, college or other organisation, you can request that the centre completes the reference for you in ‘Apply’. Go to the ‘Options’ section and click ‘Ask

a registered school, college or organisation to write your reference only'. Your referee will then add a reference to your application.

- **If you're applying independently** and your referee is *not* at a registered centre, enter their contact details in the reference section and click 'Ask referee to complete reference' at the bottom of the page. UCAS will send them an email containing login details so that they can enter the reference for you.
- If you apply independently, you can see when your reference is complete - if there's a red tick next to the reference section, it means that it has been added successfully and you can now complete your application and send it to UCAS.

If your tutor is unsure about how to add their reference, please ask them to contact the university's [admissions office](#).

Advice for the person writing your reference can also be found on the [UCAS website](#).

Can I have two referees?

The UCAS form only allows you to add one, but you can always ask course administrators if you can email them another one.

When do I submit my form?

The deadline is the 15th October, but this is for a completed application, including form, payment *and* reference. We strongly recommend submitting before the 15th to give your referee plenty of time to add their reference.

INTERVIEWS

- [Can I have a practice interview?](#)
- [How do multiple mini interviews \(MMIs\) and assessment centres work?](#)
- [Is there any advice available on what interviews are like at other universities?](#)

Can I have a practice interview?

- Yes! Drop in to speak to an information officer about preparing for interviews. Support is available from 10.00am – 4.30pm, Monday - Friday; no appointment needed. Depending on your circumstances, it may be possible to arrange a longer appointment for a practice interview with a careers adviser.
- Attend our [How to succeed at interviews](#) workshop.
- You can get [interview advice](#) on our website.

What do multiple mini interviews (MMIs) involve?

- MMIs involve being asked a range of questions with different interviewers, who are usually based at different 'stations' at the assessment centre. You may get asked to perform tasks at some of the stations, such as a role-play or a reading task. They are a real test of your communication skills, as you'll need to make a good impression first time at every station.
- Have a good think about the qualities they're looking for from applicants. Ask the course provider what type of exercises you'll be expected to do, and consider practising via our assessment centre [workshops](#) or looking at our [assessment centres](#) web page.

Is there any advice available on what interviews are like at other universities?

When invited to interview, you will be told how the day will be structured. The following resource may provide useful information on what to expect:

- [The Nerdy Vet blog: Tis the interview season](#) – tips and advice from a veterinary surgeon
- [My Interview Experience](#) – current Newcastle students and recent graduates share their interview experiences (don't forget to add to add your own!)

OTHER

- [I didn't get in this year but want to reapply next year. What should I do in my year out?](#)
- [I've been asked to submit a CV as well. What should go in it?](#)
- [Can I apply for a Masters as well as for veterinary medicine?](#)
- [It's very expensive! Is there any financial support available?](#)
- [I've had an offer, but I'm still waiting to hear back from my first choice – what do I do?](#)
- [What other kinds of support are available?](#)

I didn't get in this year but want to reapply next year. What should I do in my year out?

- Think carefully about the skills and qualities you need to be a successful applicant. Reflect on your last application experience and ask yourself what needs to be developed, for example, do your communication skills need more work? Use this analysis to inform your choices about your next move.
- You could consider applying for related jobs within your particular specialism, for example, working in administration in a practice; or roles as an animal care assistant, groom or farm worker. However, you could also apply for jobs outside animal care and continue with your voluntary work or work shadowing in your spare time.

I've been asked to submit a CV as well. What should go in it?

The same rules apply as for a normal CV. Think very carefully about what the admissions tutor is looking for and tailor your CV accordingly. You can get your CV checked by the Careers Service between 10am - 4:30pm, no appointment necessary.

See our [CV page](#) for more information on CV writing.

Can I apply for a Masters as well as for veterinary medicine?

Yes, if you are looking for a 'plan B'. Masters applications are made to individual institutions and do not go through the UCAS system.

It's very expensive! Is there any financial support available?

- It is important that you check with your course providers to see how much they intend to charge and what kind of support is available.
- Applicants should be aware that, owing to the requirements of the course, veterinary students are generally unable to use their vacations to earn money.

There are other sources of support available, including [Professional and Career Development Loans](#). Visit [Funding further study](#) for more information.

I've had an offer, but I'm still waiting to hear back from my first choice – what should I do?

Check out the [UCAS advice](#) on accepting offers.

What other kinds of support are available?

You can speak to your School, personal tutor, or the Careers Service for more information. The Careers Service is open Monday-Friday 10am - 4:30pm, and you can access support without an appointment. If you are off-campus, please use our [web enquiry form](#) to email your query.