



Careerpilot

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**Career
Guides:
Getting into
Veterinary
Medicine**

[careerpilot.org.uk](https://www.careerpilot.org.uk)

Working as a vet is an exciting, rewarding and diverse career.

Vets diagnose and treat sick animals. One vet in general practice can take on a range of roles from surgeon, to radiologist, to pharmacist. Working as a vet is definitely not 9-5 – it's more of a way of life than a job, and you definitely need to be prepared to work evenings and weekends too. You will be trained to work with a huge range of animals from budgies to zebras and you need to like working with people too!

Have you got what it takes to be a vet?

[Do you have what it takes to be a vet?](#) – why not have a go at this free course from the University of Edinburgh?

Training as a vet can lead to a huge range of different opportunities for example:

- as a specialist in your field e.g. equine surgeon
- as a researcher - identifying and containing outbreaks of animal diseases such as BSE and preventing the spread to humans.
- in animal conservation projects abroad.
- working in animal nutrition or pharmaceuticals
- treating sniffer dogs in the armed forces
- working as a vet abroad in USA, Australia, New Zealand or Africa.



Current shortage of trained vets in the UK

There are 20,000 vets in the UK and this is currently not enough, as the demand for vets is expected to increase when we leave the EU transition period in 2021.

In response the government has created two new vet schools at **Harper Adams and Keele University** and **University of Aberystwyth in Wales**.

What are the routes into Veterinary Medicine?

There are two routes into veterinary medicine.

1. An **RCVS accredited degree in veterinary science or medicine** - usually 5 years long
2. An **accelerated RCVS accredited degree in veterinary science or medicine** for students with existing relevant degrees – usually 4 years long.

Which universities offer Veterinary Medicine?

All universities that offer veterinary medicine/science degrees must be accredited by [the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons \[RCVS\]](#). There are currently 10 universities that have this accreditation or are expecting to get it before 2021.

- Bristol
- Cambridge
- Edinburgh
- Glasgow
- Liverpool
- London Royal Veterinary School



- Nottingham Have two start dates one in September and one in April every year.
- Surrey – new 2019
- **Harper Adams and Keele** **New for 2020**
- **Aberystwyth [in partnership with RVS]** **New for 2021 first in Wales**

Applying for Veterinary Medicine degrees

Apply through UCAS the deadline is **October 15th**.

You can apply for up to 4 universities to study veterinary medicine.

If you are from a widening participation background you maybe eligible for the 'Gateway year to Veterinary Medicine' you may be able to apply for this as your fifth choice [see below].

What is the process to getting an offer for a place on a vet medicine course?

Candidates are selected on the basis of their;

- all-round ability including educational achievements and A level predictions,
- motivation to study the subject, awareness of current issues and developments in veterinary medicine and science.
- personal attributes and strengths - ability to work as part of a team, initiative, communication skills, self-confidence, compassion and empathy.
- significant experience with a wide range of animals

This information is gleaned from a combination of information and assessments. For example your UCAS form has your personal statement and also your academic achievements and predictions. You will also submit work experience evidence and references. This information is scored and then you will be invited to attend an interview.

You may then be offered a conditional offer based on achieving specific grades in your A level exams or completing further work experience.

It is very competitive indeed so you need to make sure you know what you need and put some work into research and preparation to be successful.

What do I need to be successful?

Find out the academic entrance requirements.

These courses are very competitive and are academically challenging so they generally set high entrance requirements. However, every course has different grade requirements at GCSE and A level. Some of the courses will accept BTEC animal management courses and BTEC applied science and some won't.

The newer courses at this stage appear to have more flexible and slightly lower entry requirements.

GCSE requirements

These vary but on the whole they are looking for 5 GCSEs grades 6/7 and above with required subjects of English Maths and science. Sometimes a grade is specified in physics if not taken at A level. Eg Liverpool's GCSE entry requirements are three 7s and four 6s and above in English, maths and science.

GCSE grades are often an important part of the selection process, so the more grades you can offer at 7 and above the better.

A level requirements

Subjects – Biology required for nearly all universities and biology and chemistry required by most. The third subject is not specified by most universities although maths or physics are specified by some.

Grades Required

These vary from A*AA at Cambridge to AAA at RVS, Bristol and Liverpool through to AAB at the new course at Harper Adams and Keele university.

If you meet specific widening participation criteria such as which school you attend or where you live, you may qualify for a lower offer depending on your circumstances. This is called a contextual offer. For example at Bristol instead of needing AAA you may be offered AAC. Find out if you qualify [here](#).

Vocational Subjects accepted

Some universities like Liverpool and Cambridge do not accept vocational subjects like BTECs for entry. However, there are other universities that will accept BTECs in Animal Management and Applied Science – you need to check each of the departments' websites.

BTEC Grades required

These vary from DDD to D*D*D* and sometimes they specify the actual units required.

Applying to Cambridge

Cambridge also requires applicants to apply to sit the Cambridge [pre interview assessment](#) for Natural Sciences. This needs to be booked in advance of submitting your UCAS application.

Schemes if you don't meet the academic requirements.

Some universities offer a one year course 'Preliminary' or 'Gateway' courses if you don't meet the criteria for the degree, which then can guarantee you progression on to the 5 year degree programme.

Preliminary year

[University of Nottingham – Veterinary Medicine and Surgery – including a preliminary year.](#)

This is aimed at high performing applicants who may have only taken either biology or chemistry at A level.

Gateway courses

These are offered by Bristol, Liverpool, Glasgow, Nottingham and RVS. If you get on this course you can get a guaranteed interview at any of the other universities in the scheme.

Check with each institution as their entry requirements do vary. Here is an example of a course below;

[University of Bristol BVsc Gateway to Veterinary Science](#)

Gateway to Veterinary Science is aimed at students who have the potential to become vets but do not meet the standard academic entry criteria to apply directly to the five-year undergraduate Veterinary Science course.

This course is aimed at students who have the potential to be successful but have had less opportunities so far. The universities can take into account a range of criteria including your home post code, whether you are a

refugee, or in care or a carer. They may also be interested if you are the first person in your family to go to university, or have been disadvantaged in some way.

Grade requirements

- The grade requirements for Bristol's course are 5 GCSEs grade 4 and above including English and Maths.
- A level grade BBC including a B in biology or chemistry
- DMM in BTEC Applied Science or Animal Management

What are the work experience requirements for vet medicine?

It is really important for you to do work experience to see whether you like **all** aspects of this job, before you commit to a 5 year long degree, to make sure it is really what you want to do.

The majority of universities insist on a specific number of weeks work experience and evidence of this when you apply, but many like Cambridge and Harper Adams & Keele don't insist on a specific amount of time.

The minimum time universities require varies between 4 weeks and 8 weeks – although as it is competitive many people may have done much more than the minimum.

If you are applying to vet medicine you should have done both clinical placements in a vet's practice and also a range of animal work experience in different settings. This could include:

- Seeing veterinary practice, both large and small animal if possible.
- Livestock farms - dairy and lambing are particularly useful.
- Other animal establishments, such as zoos, kennels, catteries, wildlife centres, pig farms, poultry farms and stables
- A day at an abattoir is recommended but not demanded.
- Experience gained in veterinary or medical laboratories to help you appreciate the scientific basis of veterinary medicine.

Tips for getting work experience:

- Contact lots of different animal-related places near you, from vets to city farms or riding schools
- Find your local vets practice [here](#)
- Send an email first, then call or visit to follow up. If they can't help, can they recommend someone who will?
- Looking after your own pets or working on the family farm don't count as far as work experience is concerned for many universities, although it is still a useful experience.
- Keep trying!

How to provide evidence of work experience placements.

After you complete your UCAS form you are likely to be sent a questionnaire or a **supplementary questions form** that asks you for information about the work experience that you have completed.

The universities will ask you to submit proof of your work experience. You will need to provide information about what you did on work experience and how long you did the work experience for. Your supervisor will need to submit a report/ reference too.

Here are some examples of work experience questions and requirements:

[Surrey](#)

[Edinburgh](#)

You normally only have a week after you have submitted your UCAS application to submit the work experience information. They usually only want to know what you have done by the date the form has to be submitted.

- Write down dates and information about what you did on work experience as you complete it.
- Make sure you ask for Referee report / reference in good time – Start talking to them well in advance of the deadline and provide any useful info that they might need to be able to talk in a glowing, affirmative manner about you.

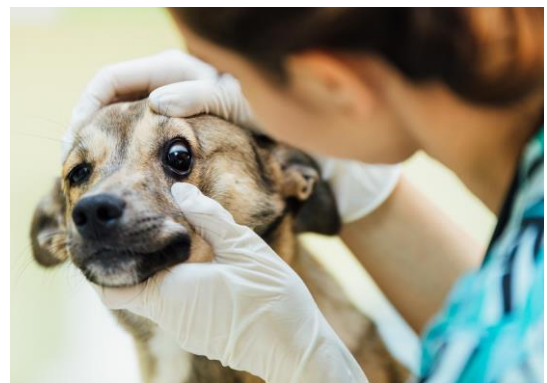
What happens once I have submitted my UCAS form and work experience evidence?

The university look at all the information about your academic grades and predictions and your work experience and score your application. The applications with the highest application are invited to an interview.

Interviews

You will be either invited to a panel which could have several interviewers or you could be asked to attend a MMI [multiple mini interview].

Multiple Mini Interviews: you will do several short five-minute activities each designed to test a different skill, from communication, critical thinking and manual dexterity.



If you don't get an offer.

- Ask for feedback from the interview.
- You may choose to reapply the following year

Be aware of the additional course costs on a vet medicine degree.

To develop your practical skills and theoretical knowledge many courses involve up to 28 hours of contact time a week and most courses last for 45 weeks a year for the 5 years. Due to the length and intensity of the course you are unlikely to be able to work part time during the course or in the holidays.

As well as this, all degree courses must include 28 weeks of 'learning on the job' [EMS](#) [Extra Mural Studies] before you graduate. This is broken down into 12 weeks of animal husbandry [usually on a farm] and 28 weeks of clinical experience. When you do your EMS you may have to travel or board away from home and these will be additional costs.

You will also need to spend about £500 on buying all the clothes and equipment you need to do the practical training eg scrubs and clogs, wellington boots etc.

Universities do however, offer a range of financial support such as bursaries and a hardship fund to help with the costs.

Graduate jobs!

Although it is not cheap to train to be a vet once you graduate there are a shortage of vets and there is almost 100% employment for veterinary science students after graduation. The average starting salary is £30 000.

If you have studied a course that is also accredited in Australia, America or New Zealand you may have the opportunity to go and work abroad too!!

Here are some useful links and Youtube films to help you find out more about Vet Medicine.

Year 12 Tasters and Experience sessions for vet medicine

- [Pre vet summer school](#)
- [Farm experiences week with RVS](#)
- [Vet Medicine taster courses](#)
- [Sutton School](#)



Boost your personal statement?

[Free short online courses from the University of Edinburgh](#)

- The truth about cats and dogs
- Do you have what it takes to be a Vet?
- Animal behaviour and welfare
- Chicken behaviour and welfare

Short Youtube films all about studying vet medicine at Cambridge

- [Vet Medicine at Cambridge](#)
- [Why study at Cambridge?](#)
- [What's in the course at Cambridge?](#)
- [How do you apply to vet school at Cambridge?](#)
- [Really useful presentation about what its like to study to be a vet at uni \[and Cambridge\]](#)
- [Day in the life of a first year vet at Edinburgh](#)
- [Vet medicine at RVS](#)

'Gateway' information

- [Royal Veterinary College – eligibility for widening participation schemes eg Gateway](#)
- [Vet Gateway Course at RVS](#)

Interviews

- [Watch a practice mock interview for vet med at Cambridge](#)
- [Tips for Getting into vet school – UCAS application, work experience and interviews.](#)

Useful Careers booklet

[Veterinary science for all... published by RVS](#)