

Vet School

Part One



Chris Shivelton Queen MRCVS

"Vet School is full of invaluable information and advice, making it an essential read for anyone interested in a veterinary career - thoroughly recommended."

Joe Inglis BVSc MRCVS



VET SCHOOL

AUTHOR

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Chris has been writing and offering advice and guidance on all aspects of vet careers and vet school applications since he was a vet student himself. He graduated in July 2007 from Bristol University, having also intercalated to achieve an additional degree in Biochemistry. Chris has been in small animal practice since graduation, initially in Oxford and then, most recently, working in the Berkshire,

Hampshire and Surrey area. Chris has been presenting to prospective future vets for many years and wrote the first edition of Vet School back in 2009, establishing his own publishing company in the process and going on to publish books by professionals in other fields. In 2012, he struck out on his own, setting up Shivelton Limited, and established Vet School Success. In addition to his advisory work on veterinary careers, Chris is a technology enthusiast and has developed iPhone apps and writes on technology



in the veterinary sector, both through his blog (www.thenerdyvet.com) and for the veterinary press.

Chris currently lives in Dubai, UAE, and when he isn't treating the city's small animals or working on his next book or article, can be found out training for triathlons, indulging in various watersports or leaping from various planes and helicopters in the name of fun (with a parachute on, mind!).

Having successfully advised scores of students over the years, many of whom return to contribute themselves, Chris is proud of the fact that Vet School has helped so many students fulfil their ultimate dream of becoming a vet.

"I would like to thank each and every one of the fantastic contributors who have given their time and benefit of their experiences and knowledge to make this book the enjoyable yet useful tool that is. Special thanks go to Caroline for her, as ever, exquisite illustrations. This is the fifth book that I have personally had the pleasure of working with Caroline on and seeing her graphics for the first time remains one of my favorite parts of the whole process of creating a book. Lizzie Lockett also deserves a special thank you and, again, has been a long-term collaborator and contributor to my writing. Luke Gamble, the legend that is, has been hugely supportive of my writing and in spite of being a Global Superstar has also been ready to drop what he's doing to help me out. Kimberley Marsh, who has kindly allowed her personal statement to be reprinted, and the plethora of students, vets and professionals who have contributed to this book all deserve mention. I am proud to consider every one of these fine people as friends in addition to colleagues. Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family for their enduring love and support during the writing of Vet School. Thank you all."

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PREFACE



Like many of my friends and colleagues, I wanted to be a vet from an early age. It was the singular ambition of my education, partly because of the lure of a varied and interesting career, but also because of the unwavering support and encouragement from my

parents and teachers who rallied behind my young dreams. I liked animals, loved the outdoors and that was that; I was all set from about the age of ten.

I don't remember ever being asked what sort of vet I wanted to be though. Twenty five years ago, 'being a vet' said it all. Treating sick animals, indoors or outdoors, large or small – it was simply assumed that 'being a vet' covered all the bases. James Herriot here we come.

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Today, things are quite different. 'Being a vet' hardly skims the surface when describing a profession that is so progressive and evolving that it includes top research scientists to specialist surgeons who singularly work on specific parts of specific species. Being a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons opens so many doors it is difficult to know which ones to knock at.

There is no doubt, knowing what you want to do from an early stage, helps you get where you want to go. It's also incredibly important to be happy when you get there. The hard work, dedication and focus that this vocation demands is absolutely worth it if it delivers your dream and fulfills your ambition. But appreciating all the fantastic opportunities that becoming an MRCVS presents is the key to making the most of them.

From the challenges you will need to conquer to get into vet school, to deciding what sort of vet you might choose to become, this excellent book is a unique guide in helping you appreciate the road ahead and equipping you for the journey.

From UCAS application through to interview technique, this book provides an informative and honest text that is essential background reading in knowing exactly what you are taking on when you decide to qualify as a veterinary surgeon.

For my part, I've no regrets. If I had my time again, I'd do exactly the same thing and I can't imagine being part of a more rewarding and enjoyable profession. Yet it's fair to say, I can't

think of a single friend with whom I qualified who is the same ‘type of vet’ that I am. We all have chosen different paths and work with different species or in different fields of expertise. None of us knew that would be the case when we arrived at vet school on our first day, but that is the way the profession is moving and anyone wishing to become a vet needs to be prepared for understanding that ‘being a vet’ can mean just about doing anything you want with an interest in the welfare of animals.

So in summary, if you are considering veterinary as a career option— and all the wonderful, exciting directions it can take you – then this book will tell you all you need to know about the opportunities that await – it is just up to you to go for it. Good luck and stick with it. Your adventure awaits!

Luke Gamble BVSc MRCVS

Founder & CEO

Worldwide Veterinary Service

www.wvs.org.uk



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I: WHAT IS VETERINARY?

Why do you want to be a vet? It's worth getting used to this question now as you are going to hear these eight words countless times as you start your journey toward becoming a vet. So, why *do you* want to be a vet? Perhaps you've grown up around animals, either living on a farm or owning pets, and really enjoy interacting with them on a day to day basis. Its possible that it was an early experience of visiting the vets, either with a new, healthy pet or, as is often the case with those who hear the call, with an ill animal who may have made a remarkable recovery or perhaps been put-to-sleep by the kind and sympathetic vet. Maybe you're drawn to the sciences and see veterinary as an excellent route into pursuing science as a career option, of which it is an excellent one. You may feel very strongly about animal welfare issues and wish to dedicate your life to helping animals that can't fight for themselves. You may simply have seen one of the many fascinating, exciting and touching TV shows that grace our screens from time to time and which offer interesting insights into the varied careers of today's vets. Whatever your initial trigger to developing an interest in veterinary as a possible career, the fact remains that it is ultimately a wonderfully varied, exciting, challenging, intriguing, at times messy and emotional, and rapidly developing profession, with the kind of highs and lows that only ever come with both a medical career and one that brings us into direct close contact with both animals and humans alike.

Its probably worth, at this stage, telling you why I decided to become a vet. My story is one that is fairly typical of many

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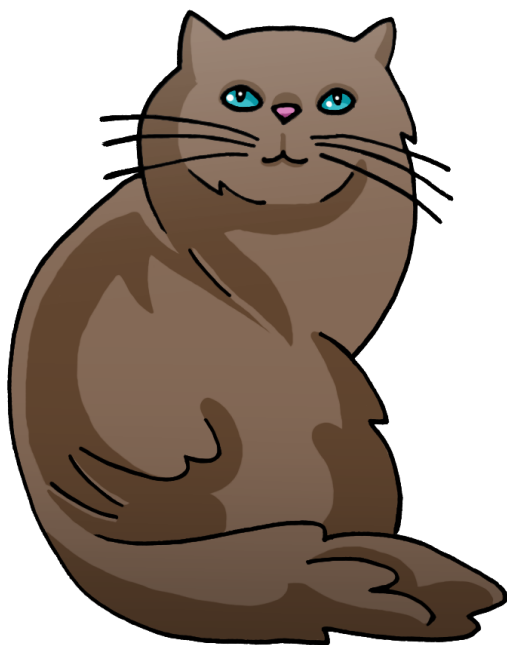
veterinary graduates: I grew up with pets, initially a small family dog, followed by rabbits and a gerbil with a particularly unpredictable mood, called Ernie, and so liked animals from an early age and had visited the vets a few times with said pets. As such, the idea that I could spend my adult life with animals seemed like a pretty good one. I was also a bit of a nerd and am not ashamed at all to say that I liked school, and did rather well. One of the subjects I remember enjoying and being fairly adept in was science, and so the idea of doing something 'sciencey' that also enabled me to work with animals led me to explore what I would need to do in order to become a vet. The more I read, saw and experienced, the more certain I became that there was simply no other career that I could see myself engaged in. The fact that veterinary was, according to my teachers and some of what I read, one of, if not the, most difficult courses to gain entry onto reinforced my determination to succeed. There are many character traits that vets seem to share and one of them is definately a steely determination and attraction to doing anything that others deem to be "too difficult" or, a particular favourite of mine, "impossible." The combination of a course that was not only fiercely competitive and difficult to get onto, that offered the chance to work with animals every day and which meant I would be using my science skills and knowledge was impossible to ignore and so I set out down the long path to vet school. In spite of brief flirtations with other career options, namely the Household Cavalry, architecture, stockbroking and for a very short two-weeks, wanting to become a heart surgeon, inspired by a new TV medical drama, it was always veterinary that I was ultimately committed to pursuing. The rest, as they say, is history but one that now sees me qualified and working as a vet, and able to share my experience and advice with you as you set on down the path

Chapter 1: What is Veterinary?

yourself. If you are interested in reading more about my own journey to vet school then you can pick up a copy of my other book, *The Nerdy Vet's Vet School Success*, available through the Vet School Success website.

What exactly does a vet do?

Essentially, a vet is qualified to diagnose and treat disease in animals, and basically is the animal kingdom's equivalent of our very own doctors and surgeons. Most of us, when we think of vets, will likely see the classic image of a vet in a consulting top at our local small animal clinic, giving our pets their annual health checks and vaccinations, and occasionally seeing them if they are poorly and need medicine or surgery. The truth, however, is that a degree in veterinary is a ticket to a myriad of opportunities and career options beyond those that we classically imagine. Vets are employed in many capacities and across lots of industries, from scientific research, to teaching, to specialising in one specific area of veterinary, such as oncology or surgery, to marketing and sales in businesses, such as pharmaceutical companies, even to protecting the food that we eat and ensuring that it is safe to do so. The vet degree is, at present, still very much a broad-based, all encompassing education, which prepares new vets for future specialisation and any number of different and varied career paths. One thing that is worth developing an appreciation of now, at this early stage, is the fact that you are very likely to see your career change a number of times throughout your professional life and it is always fascinating to speak with vets and hear how their current career is often very far removed from what they saw themselves doing when they were



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2: TRAINING AS A VET

Most people are aware of the fact that vets go to university in order to train and many, as a result of some of the popular TV shows that have delved into the world of vet school, will even have some insight into aspects of the clinical training that vet students undertake before graduating and being let loose on the world as fully primed vets. What the shows don't really touch upon much is what goes on earlier on in the degree programme and the exact subjects and disciplines that are taught. This chapter will provide you with a simple but thorough overview of vet training, as it stands in the UK, and even touch upon the options for studying overseas and on other 'veterinary' courses.

Where are the Vet Schools?

The UK has seven vet schools - although at the time of print, there is due to be an eighth taking its first cohort in 2014, with the University of Surrey claiming the title. When compared with the thirty odd medical schools that we have it makes it immediately clear why veterinary is such a difficult course to gain entry into. There is also a vet school in Dublin, part of the University College Dublin, and although applicants apply directly and not through UCAS, as with the other seven, Dublin is considered to be 'part of the family,' especially as their students are as active in the various vet school social and representative endeavours as any of the other schools. The UK vet schools are, in no particular order (links to the

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schools' websites and further information can be found at www.vetschoolsuccess.com):

Royal Veterinary College (RVC)

This is the biggest of the bunch, with an average year size of about 230, which is just about on the edge, in my opinion, of it still being possible to know everyone in your year, which is one of the really great things about being a vet student. Teaching is split between Camden, in London, where the original Royal Veterinary College is sited and where students spend their first two years living and studying, and their Hawkshead Campus, in Potters Bar, Hertfordshire, which is where undergraduates move for their clinical training. The RVC is also AVMA-accredited, which means that as a graduate from this vet school, you will have one less hoop to jump through before being able to work as a vet in the USA.

The RVC offers a number of veterinary-inspired courses, including a Gateway programme (more on this later) and an accelerated course for graduates. There is a full list of the courses currently on offer at www.vetschoolsuccess.com or you can check out each vet school's individual website.

Glasgow - part of the University of Glasgow

One of two Scottish vet schools, Glasgow currently offers two courses, although only the BVMS in Veterinary Medicine & Surgery will lead to you graduating as a vet. The average year size at Glasgow is 140, which is slightly more than most of the UK schools, although definately enables you to get to know most, if not all, of your fellow undergraduates very well by the time of graduation.

There is an unofficial rivalry between Glasgow and Edinburgh, with an annual sports day adding to the friendly banter that ensues between them.

Teaching at Glasgow is undertaken at the Garscube Campus at the north-west boundary of the city, with all five years taught together on the same campus.

Edinburgh - part of the University of Edinburgh

All vet students at Edinburgh are taught on one site, the Easter Bush Campus, which is about seven miles south of the city centre and the average number of students per year is 120, very much in line with the UK average. Edinburgh offers a number of veterinary degree options, all awarding a BVM&S (Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine & Surgery), albeit with different 'flavours' for graduate applicants, such as the BVM&S with Integrated PhD. Undergraduates currently have just one option, which is the standard five year BVM&S course, which qualifies graduates as vets.

Liverpool - part of the University of Liverpool

The teaching at Liverpool, like several of the other schools, is split between two sites. The majority of pre-clinical teaching is conducted in Liverpool itself over years 1-3, with the final two years seeing students move outside of the city to complete their clinical training at the Neston campus.

The average year size at Liverpool is 120 and there are two courses on offer to undergraduates which lead to qualification as a vet, with the only difference being that the six year course includes an

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intercalated BSc year in addition to the main BVSc (Bachelor of Veterinary Science) degree. Graduate applicants can, on condition that they have a suitable degree, apply to fast-track the BVSc course, completing it in four years as opposed to the standard five.

Liverpool also offers a couple of course options which do not directly lead to qualification as a vet but which could, potentially, serve as starting points for further progression onto full veterinary training.

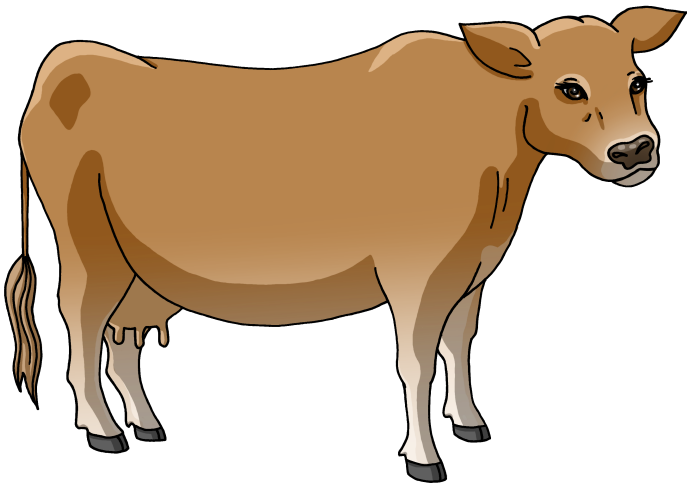
Nottingham - part of the University of Nottingham

Vet students at Nottingham are taught at the Sutton Bonnington campus, which is between Nottingham and Loughborough. Other students, mainly from agricultural courses, also reside and study here so its not all vet students that you'll be hanging out with. The average intake for Nottingham is about 110 students per year onto the main vet course. Like many of the schools, Nottingham does offer a range of vet course options, including the 6 year veterinary medicine and surgery course with a preliminary year, and the 6 year Gateway programme.

Clinical training in the final year is achieved through off-site clinical partner practices, who host students for teaching.

Bristol - part of the University of Bristol

As a Bristol graduate myself it is difficult not to end up inadvertently allowing some bias to slip through so if I do end up shining a light on my alma mater more than the other schools then it is simply in my DNA and to be expected. Students at Bristol, who have an



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3: MAKING AN APPLICATION

Of all the jobs in the veterinary sector admissions tutors probably have the hardest, and most responsible, one of all. Why? Well, they are the people who get to decide who is offered the chance to study to become a vet and therefore go on to ultimately shape the future of the profession.

Applications to the seven (soon to be eight) UK vet schools are made by submitting an application through UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) by no later than the 15th October, which is an earlier deadline than for other courses. We will cover the UCAS application in more detail in a later chapter.

What type of candidates are the admissions tutors looking for? The key things admissions tutors look for in applicants are, first of all, evidence of enthusiasm and motivation, which means that they want to see that you have seriously considered why veterinary is the career choice for you and that you are informed. Secondly, they want to see that you have potential and that you're likely to be a candidate who will be able to cope with, and contribute to, the course and to veterinary as a whole. This is a lot to glean from one application form and is why vet schools also interview those candidates they are interested in, as well as possibly using additional methods of trying to differentiate between the scores of applications they receive. These 'additional' tools include the BMAT and questionnaires, both of which we will talk about.

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Work Experience

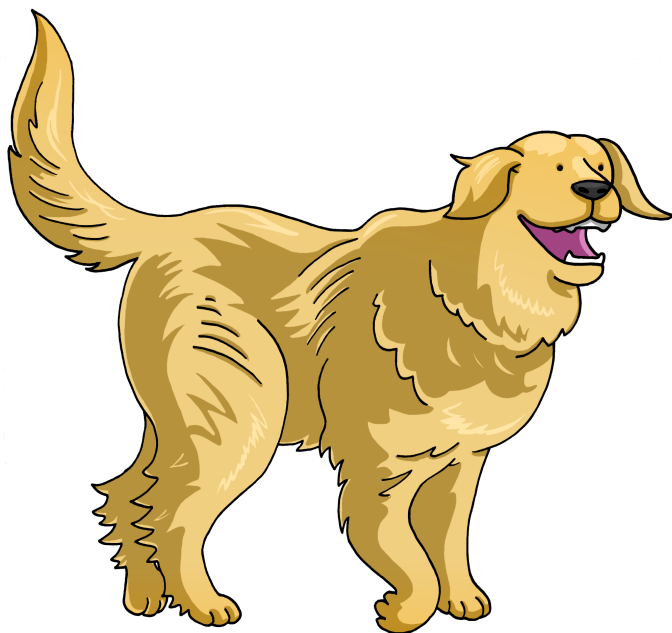
This is the only real and reliable way by which you are going to know what you are letting yourself in for with veterinary. TV programmes, books and the media tend to lead people to believe that being a vet is a lot more glamorous and lucrative than it actually is. Basing your future career decision and committing to a minimum of five years at university, with the accompanying levels of debt, on anything less than first-hand exposure to the job is foolish and the vet schools have had long enough to know this. It is for this reason that work-experience is still one of the most important features of the application criteria. Some vet schools, in response to the fact that it is getting harder and harder for prospective vets to secure placements are unofficially talking about placing less emphasis on work-experience but I believe this is unlikely to remain the case. The fact of the matter is that it costs a fortune to train a vet and letting people on the course without evidence that they know what they are signing up for is going to result in fewer candidates completing the course and/ or entering and staying in the profession. Surely what we need to be doing is to think of ways in which we can enable more students to have access to work-experience placements. This is a debate that could, however, rage on for pages and pages.

Ok, so you've done some work-experience. Great. What the admissions tutors want to see, however, is that you have a breadth of experience and, more importantly, that you got something positive out of the experience. There is no point simply listing a load of random placements on your application form without discussing, even briefly, what you gained from the time. Did you learn anything

about teamwork or the importance of effective communication during one of your placements? If so then say as much. Every placement you do will teach you something about the profession and yourself that you can communicate to the admissions tutor reading your statement. The example personal statement included in the UCAS chapter demonstrates clearly the importance of identifying lessons from the placements you complete.

Grades

Anyone who tries to convince you that grades aren't important is simply misleading you. The simple truth is that academic performance is still one of the most reliable ways to predict candidates' potential to be able to absorb, assimilate and retain the large volumes of information and complicated principles that are taught to veterinary students. There is, however, recognition of the fact that solely focusing on top grades can limit access to the profession and the profession is actively trying to address this imbalance. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may, for example, have the potential to achieve highly but do not perform well in recognised examinations as a result of their circumstances. Various widening participation schemes exist to try and encourage applications from students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The RVC (London) Gateway programme (UCAS code D190) is one such scheme which invites applications from students who fulfil specific criteria, such as receiving, or being eligible to receive, an EMA (Educational Maintenance Grant), and has lower minimum grade requirements than the standard veterinary programme.



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4: WORK EXPERIENCE

How do you really know that you want to do something? The answer is by doing it. You might think that you know what being a vet is all about from watching TV shows, reading vet books and watching your pet's vet in action on their annual vaccination trips, but the truth is that until you pop the hood and take a look at the mechanics of the car that is your chosen career option, then you'll not be able to make informed decisions about what is actually one of the most important decisions of your life.

Vets work in many different capacities, from small animal practice to equine to farm, and beyond. Our training is still one in which we are taught, examined and ultimately qualified across the board. If you find that upon starting your training there are aspects of being a vet that you cannot cope with, such as meat production, then you'll either find the course incredibly difficult to complete or feel compelled to leave vet school, with the heartache and stress of having potentially wasted a number of years of your young life that you could have spent focusing your efforts on a far more suitable career. The value of work experience is in drastically reducing the chances of this from happening by exposing you to the realities of the veterinary profession before you apply. This will either have the effect of confirming your wish to pursue a career as a vet, in which case your application will undoubtedly beam with passionate enthusiasm and wonderful examples of your dedication to and

knowledge of the profession, or inform you that it perhaps was not quite what you had first imagined and that your future may lay in a different direction. This is what is meant by making an informed decision and is why I believe work experience is the most important aspect to anyone's preparation for applying to vet school.

Do the vet schools really care?

Yes, they do. Training you to be a vet is a costly, lengthy process and it really sucks to have students drop out of the course during their degree. By focusing on recruiting students who have shown that they have seriously considered their options and made an informed choice that veterinary is what they want to do, the vet schools significantly reduce the chances of you not sticking with things. The drop-out rate for vet degrees is incredibly low, in large part due to the fact that in spite of it being really tough at times, each vet student accepted their place with eyes wide open to what lay ahead and the prize at the end.

Most vet schools will assess your level of work experience through reading your UCAS application and specifically your personal statement. If they see potential then you will likely be invited for an interview during which you may well be asked to expand on your experiences. Some, such as RVC and Edinburgh, request extra information on your work experience to be submitted separately to your main application.

How much is enough?

Although some vet schools specify a minimum amount of work experience from applicants, such as Liverpool who advise a recommended minimum of ten weeks and an absolute minimum of six weeks experience, the truth is that simply sticking to completing the minimum amount is unlikely to do your application a great deal of service. You are highly likely to be competing with many other students, all with similarly high grades, for each place and it is vital to be able to demonstrate that it is you who has really delved deeply enough into the profession to satisfy the admissions tutors that you're dedicated. Focusing on the amount of experience is, however, missing the point and it is far better to ensure that you have a good breadth of experience even if that means spending less time on any one specific placement type. The vet schools will want to see evidence that you fully understand the plethora of roles that veterinary graduates fill and that they're not all performing complex, life-saving specialist surgery every day. If you are short on time, perhaps because you have started seriously considering being a vet at college as opposed to high school, then you should ensure that you satisfy the minimum requirements of the vet schools you are planning on applying to before you start thinking 'outside the box.' You'll not get any additional points by scoring a super-placement if you submit your application without any evidence of having set foot on a farm. If, however, you are starting your preparations super early - I started looking into applying to vet school when I was fourteen but then again, I am

a nerd - then you have the luxury of more time. Of course, that doesn't mean to say that other factors won't conspire against you, such as your age, but the more time you have before applying to vet school then the more placements you can feasibly apply to and complete, and the more opportunities you should have, or rather create for yourself, to do something especially interesting.

As a general rule, I would recommend the following as a bare minimum, although I urge you to ensure that you check the vet schools' individual requirements as they are always subject to change:

- 2 week's in a small animal practice, paying particular attention to helping the nurses in their duties
- 1 week of large animal/ farm practice, during which you'll get to go out on farm visits with the vet
- 1 week of equine (horse) practice. This might be in a clinic or involve going out on calls with a vet
- 1 week of dairy farm experience
- 1 week of experience in a stables
- At least one day working within a laboratory setting



Ellie Hornsby

Vet Student Cambridge Vet School

Ellie is a student at Cambridge University's vet school and also applied to Edinburgh, RVC and Nottingham vet schools. She received a rejection without interview from Nottingham, but offers from the other three.

In her spare time Ellie likes to dance, go to the beach or curl up with a good book. Ellie is from sunny Scarborough, North Yorkshire.

Vet School Student

1. Why did you want to be a vet?

I always find it really difficult to answer this question, even though I'm asked it so often! I can't really remember a time when I didn't want to be a vet; I've always been interested in science and cats, so it seemed like a logical career to choose.

2. Which vet schools did you apply to? Why did you choose the vet school that you're at?

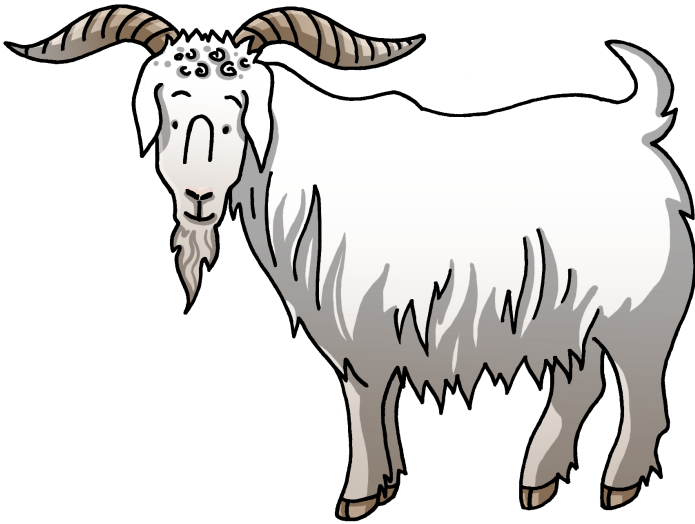
I applied to Cambridge, Edinburgh, RVC and Nottingham. Cambridge was never my stand out first choice, I just wanted to get a place at vet school, but the reaction I received from my family and friends when I told them about my Cambridge offer made the decision to come here an easy one. I think people were right in saying the opportunities offered to a student here are amazing, there are so many exciting things to do and see!

3. Which college are you studying at? Why did you choose this college?

I picked St John's after I visited on the open day and loved it. Out of all of the colleges it definitely looks most like Hogwarts, and the vets I met seemed really friendly and enthusiastic. That said, most people love the college they end up at, even if it wasn't the one they originally chose, so don't worry about it too much.

4. What was the most challenging aspect of applying to vet school?

I think for me the worst time in the application process was when I realised I hadn't done anywhere near the variety of work experience expected by many of the vet schools. I had a bit of a cry, but thankfully I realised early enough to have a jam-packed summer full of more things to put in my application, I definitely recommend starting early!



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5: UCAS FORM

The UCAS form is the gatekeeper to your place at vet school. It is the first official contact you will have with the admissions tutors who decide which students get to the next vital stage of being called for interview. As such, it is crucial to get this part of your application effort spot-on.

Deadlines

The first thing to do is to make sure you know when your application has to be in by. For applications to veterinary, medicine and dentistry courses, and all courses at Oxford and Cambridge, the deadline is normally always the 15th October. I strongly recommend having your application ready to send way before this and, if possible, send it soon after UCAS start accepting applications, which is about mid September. UCAS send applications to the admissions tutors as they receive them, with the bulk of them arriving close to the deadline. This means that the admissions tutors go from a situation of having a few applications trickling in, which they can then spend a decent period of time reading and absorbing all the fascinating and wonderful information about you, to suddenly having a torrent of forms land on their desk. It doesn't take a genius to realise that they are going to have less time to spend on each application when they have loads to plough through, so getting your application in early will improve your chances of impressing the

tutors early and getting your name on the hallowed interview list. Aiming to have your UCAS application completed early also means you have a window of time in which to review, revise and refine it before actually submitting it.

Plan

It is a good idea to prepare an agenda or timetable so that you can plan the timing of your application and see at a glance when you need to have everything completed by, including when you have to apply for and sit the BMAT if applicable. The UCAS website (www.ucas.ac.uk) is an excellent resource – not only are you able to complete, save and ultimately submit your application online, there is also a wealth of additional information and useful tools designed to help you plan and complete your application successfully. Its definitely worth a look early on in the year – in fact, why not just stop what you're doing now and check it out.

What's on the form?

There are several sections to the UCAS application, all of which are completed and submitted online. If you do not have access to the internet, either at home or at school, then you should contact UCAS as early as possible to discuss alternative methods for submitting your application.

You will need to register with UCAS online and then complete the following six sections as part of your application:

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Personal details

Additional information (UK applicants only)

Course and university choices – remember that you can only choose up to a maximum of four veterinary courses. There is no preference order and you will also need to indicate whether you are applying for deferred entry (to start the year after you actually apply) or not and whether you are going to be living at home or in student accommodation. The universities do not get to see where else you have applied so don't worry about this.

Education details – this includes details of courses taken and currently being studied, and results both achieved and pending.

Employment – if you have not had any jobs then you can leave this section blank.

Personal Statement – this is a key section as it allows you to tell the vet schools why they should offer you a place. We will discuss this in a lot more detail later.

Once you have completed your parts of the application your referee will need to complete their report on you or, if you're applying independently and not through your school or college, ask your referee to write their report and give it to you so you can enter the details online. After they have said lots of wonderful things about you the system will ask for payment. If you're applying through school then they might ask you to pay the school as they will then pay for the applications centrally,

otherwise you need to pay online using a debit or credit card. Once you've paid and are happy with everything then your application is submitted and wings its way, via UCAS, to your chosen universities. UCAS will then send you a welcome and the nervous waiting begins!

The Referee Report

This is basically a chance for your teacher, careers advisor or other professional who knows you well to sing your praises and add to the overall picture of awesomeness that you have already painted with your personal statement. The type of information that referees will typically give in their statements include your predicted grades and their assessment of your suitability to train for a particular profession. They will also typically comment on your performance in specific subjects/ exams if it is deemed that such additional information would support or strengthen your application. Information on any factors that might have affected your academic performance, or could be expected to do so in the future, could also be included, as might information about any special requirements or special needs you may have, but only with your permission. Referees may also include details of any commitments (eg. January assessments) that could prevent you from attending interviews on that specific date. It is worth remembering that under the Data Protection Act you are legally entitled to ask UCAS for a copy of any references or other personal information they hold on you. The aim of the referee, at

the end of the day, will be to support and enhance your application by painting you in the best possible light.

There are a few key bits of advice when it comes to this important part of the application, which are:

- Find out who is going to be writing your report well in advance of when it needs to be submitted, or ask someone you know and trust to write it for you if that's an option.
- Make sure they know who you are! Might sound obvious but if you've never even spoken with your referee then how are they going to know enough about you to be able to write an interesting, glowing report which doesn't just end up listing your academic credentials in a generic, dry manner? Imagine trying to write a report for someone in your class who you barely know and then consider having to do that several times. Not exactly the most inspiring writing circumstances. If you're best mates with your referee and they know all about the incredible things you have done both at school and home then great, you're on to a winner. If not then make sure they get to know you. Introduce yourself and make their job easier by telling them, preferably in writing, what you have been up to. They will thank you for it and it kind of means that you have a lot more control over what's said in your report. Another great idea is to pass on copies of your work-experience references to the person writing your report, as they will be able to quote from them when writing about you. Suddenly a potentially generic, dull, dry, boring

reference is transformed in to a piece of writing which is both interesting, engaging and paints you in the very best possible light.

- Ensure you're in their good books. You laugh but you'd be amazed how many people end up getting references written by teachers who they have managed to wind up during the year. Needless to say said teachers are unlikely to be as inspired to write something glowing about students who have irritated them than for those they get on with. If you are in this position then do yourself a favour and start smoothing things out in advance.
- Let them read your personal statement before they write their report. This is to ensure that they write something which complements rather than simply repeats, or potentially contradicts, what you've said yourself. It is clear then why it is recommended for you to prepare and write your own statement as early as possible.

What does it cost?

The fee for applying to more than one course or university is currently £23 and only £12 if applying to just one course or uni. These prices include VAT and are correct at the date of publication. You either pay your school or college, who will then pay UCAS, or pay online using a debit or credit card. For more information on the cost of applying go to the UCAS website.

VET SCHOOL

5: UCAS FORM (EXAMPLE PERSONAL STATEMENT)

Kimberley Marsh was one of the first students to take advantage of the personal statement review service, and has kindly given permission for us to take a sneak peak at her UCAS personal statement. Kimberley applied to study veterinary at four vet schools: Glasgow, Edinburgh, Nottingham and Liverpool. She was invited for interview at both Edinburgh and Glasgow.



Kneeling in sodden straw at 5:30am, pinning a ewe down with one knee whilst lambing one of a pair of twins, I began to appreciate the tolerance and patience required by an on-call vet. A week lambing helped me realise the dedication required to study Veterinary Science, but also convinced me that there's nothing else I'd rather be doing. At an early age I won an essay competition at my local vets and stayed alone with family friends to help with their

Vet School



Successfully applying to vet school is the dream of many and with the right attitude, planning, determination and hard work, it is an achievable aim. Author, Chris Queen (The Nerdy Vet) follows on from his previous books to bring you the ultimate guide to vet careers and applying successfully to study veterinary at university. Over the course of two books, Chris explores everything from work experience to interviews, UCAS applications, what to expect from your time at vet school, and more. Start your own journey to Vet School Success.



A Vet School Success title

Chris is a vet, author and a bit of a self-confessed technology Nerd. He has been writing and advising on all aspects of vet careers and vet school since a vet student himself and is proud of the difference made to numerous students, parents and schools.

www.vetschoolsuccess.com