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Animal Health Professions Exploration and Planning Guide

This guide helps students navigate the process of selecting appropriate courses and gives advice related to the many decisions to be made prior to applying to veterinary school.

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Cornell University

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Introduction

Many students enter Cornell University certain that they want to use their education to develop strong credentials for a career in veterinary medicine, while others decide on this career path after significant reflection and experience during the college years. The years spent at Cornell are a time for both exploration of the curriculum and preparation for future careers. This Guide, along with the health careers advisors, will help students to navigate the process of selecting the appropriate courses and give advice related to the many decisions to be made prior to applying to veterinary school.

In the first year, the best way to prepare for a career in veterinary medicine is by focusing on two things: forming a support network and managing your academic life. A strong support system makes it easier to navigate the initially unfamiliar and often unexpectedly rigorous intellectual terrain. Similarly, a strong start in academics brings confidence and facilitates building a strong support system. By taking coursework seriously from the first to the last days of each semester and seeking the guidance available at Cornell, you will develop the confidence needed to continue preparing for professional school.

Because veterinary medicine is a profession dedicated to the service of animals *and* people, students should develop a strong service ethic that is demonstrable through varied experiences. Service may be inside or outside the classroom and can take on many forms. Reflection on experiences, both service and clinical, is critical to demonstrating the development of the qualities of a veterinary professional. Demonstrating evidence of integrity, ethics, professionalism, written and oral communication, service-mindedness, and understanding of the field on applications to veterinary schools and in interviews is essential.

The path to a career in veterinary medicine requires students to engage in careful planning and preparation, including reflection, and to seek guidance with important decisions. The successful veterinary school applicant uses the Cornell years to develop strong academic credentials, a demonstrated commitment to the veterinary field and the service of others, and the interpersonal skills needed by future veterinarians.

Frequently Asked Questions

Which college should I enroll in?

A student in any undergraduate college at Cornell may enroll in the courses required for entry into veterinary college. Cornell undergraduate applicants to veterinary school are primarily enrolled in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences with a few in the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Engineering, and the College of Human Ecology. The appropriate choice depends largely on your other academic and career interests. Students are encouraged to consult the University's publications for information about the seven colleges at Cornell, and to review their requirements, majors, and course descriptions.

What should I major in?

Veterinary schools do not require or recommend any particular undergraduate major or designated pre-veterinary program. Cornell does not have a pre-veterinary major, and there is no evidence that admissions committees of veterinary colleges give special consideration to any particular undergraduate education beyond satisfactory completion of the required undergraduate courses; for this reason, students are encouraged to pursue their own intellectual interest in an academic major. Of students admitted to the 2019 veterinary school classes 6.6% had earned no degree, 87.7% had earned a BA/BS degree, 5.3% had earned a MA/MS degree, and 0.4% had earned a Ph.D. The majority of the admitted students with BA/BS degrees majored in animal/zoological sciences or basic science.

Cornell students might major in animal science, biological sciences, natural resources, or development sociology in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; in biological sciences, English, or anthropology in the College of Arts and Sciences; or in nutrition in the College of Human Ecology. In any case, students are able to complete the required courses while at the same time receiving a broad education and exploring other interests and careers. Students are

more likely to succeed at and benefit from subjects that are interesting and stimulating, while also leaving open the option of pursuing an alternative career.

What courses should I take?

Veterinary schools, while not requiring or recommending any particular major course of study, do require that particular undergraduate courses be completed (usually with a grade of C – 2.0 – or better). Listed below are the minimum course requirements for admission to the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University (CVMCU). Veterinary Medical School Admission Requirements (VMSAR), published by Purdue University Press, contains details for other schools. A copy is available in the Career Library, 103 Barnes Hall.

English Composition or Writing Intensive Course	6 credit hours
Biology or Zoology (with laboratory)	6 credit hours
Introductory Chemistry (with laboratory)	6 credit hours
Organic Chemistry (with laboratory)	3 credit hours
Biochemistry	4 credit hours
Physics (with laboratory)	6 credit hours
Advanced Life Science Course (lab recommended but not required)	3 credit hours

What is the optimal sequence of courses?

The *recommended order* in which to take these courses is: mathematics, chemistry or biology, physics. Biology, chemistry, and mathematics need to be started by the sophomore year if students plan to apply to veterinary schools during the fall of the senior year for matriculation in the fall following graduation. Courses are usually (but not necessarily) taken during these years:

- First-Year Writing Seminars - freshman
- General Chemistry – freshman* or sophomore
- Biology – freshman or sophomore
- Mathematics – freshman or sophomore
- Physics – sophomore or junior
- Organic Chemistry – sophomore or junior
- Biochemistry – sophomore or junior
- General Microbiology – junior

* General chemistry must be taken in the freshman year if a student plans to or wants the option to apply to veterinary school the fall of the junior year to attend veterinary school after three years of college.

How do transfer students fulfill requirements?

Transfer students should check that the courses they have taken at their previous college meet the requirements for entrance to veterinary school.

Can I take required courses Pass-Fail or S/U?

No. Do not take any requirement for veterinary school on a “pass/fail”, or “satisfactory or unsatisfactory” (S/U) basis.

Will Advanced Placement (AP) Biology credits fulfill prerequisites?

Check with an advisor before making a decision to use AP Biology credit (*see the Office of Undergraduate Biology website*). Generally speaking, students are advised *not* to use AP Biology credit because evidence has shown that students who use this credit may find themselves at a learning disadvantage in advanced courses.

Courses accepted by the College as satisfying graduation requirements *may* be used to replace introductory course requirements at veterinary schools. You should check with specific veterinary schools to determine if AP credits are acceptable. Some schools advise students to pursue advanced courses in the discipline in which AP credits were earned to reinforce the material.

Can I take prerequisites as summer school courses?

Required courses may be taken during summer session here or at other universities whose educational standards and rigor are comparable to Cornell's. In general, it is preferable to take these courses at Cornell during the regular school year in order to demonstrate that you can perform well even while carrying a full course load. Your college advising office can explain the procedure for attending summer school elsewhere.

What kinds of animal care related experience do I need?

Veterinary medicine is an animal-oriented profession. Therefore, experiences working with different kinds of animals in different settings and a demonstrated understanding of the veterinary profession are important considerations in the selection process. Such experience may involve breeding, rearing, feeding, and showing various kinds of animals including companion animals, livestock, laboratory animals, zoo animals, or wildlife. Students should be prepared to present evidence of hands-on experience with animals and sufficient contact with the veterinary profession to demonstrate an understanding of the duties and responsibilities of a practitioner and the scope of veterinary medicine to the admissions committees. Some schools may require that a veterinarian write one of an applicant's letters of recommendation. Successful applicants to CVMCU typically have 400 or more hours of veterinary experience.

How do I apply to veterinary schools?

The centralized online application service Veterinary Medical College Application Service (VMCAS) handles applications for 29 (out of 30) U.S. veterinary institutions, along with two Canadian, two Scottish, one English, one Irish, one Australian, and one New Zealand veterinary institutions. You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the VMCAS application through information provided by AAVMC (Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges) and through the VMCAS website (<http://www.aavmc.org/Students-Applicants-and-Advisors/Veterinary-Medical-College-Application-Service.aspx>). Applications to schools that do not participate in VMCAS and offshore veterinary schools are made to each school individually.

Which standardized examinations are required for application to veterinary schools?

All veterinary schools accept the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). Some accept the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). CVMCU accepts either the GRE or MCAT. VMSAR contains standardized test scores and GPA minimums and averages for veterinary schools as well as information about preferred standardized tests. For more information about the MCAT, see the *Guide for First- and Second-Year Pre-Medical Students* and the *Guide for Advanced Pre-Medical Students*.

What are the application statistics for veterinary schools?

In 2017, there were 7,076 applicants for the approximately 4,120 available seats to U.S. schools of veterinary medicine. The number of applicants increased from the 6,667 who applied in the 2016 cycle. The 7,076 applicants in the 2016 cycle produced over 34,116 individual applications, an average of 4.8 schools per applicant. The average VMCAS fee was \$495 per applicant.

The average GPA for accepted applicants was 3.55 in 2017. The average GRE percentile scores of accepted applicants in the 2017 cycle were 65.9 for the verbal section and 56.7 for the quantitative section.

Approximately 50-100 Cornell students apply to CVMCU each year. Over the last five years roughly 17-23 members of the CVMCU classes were from Cornell.

What is the current employment outlook for vets?

Surveys conducted in 2014 indicate that sixty-three percent of all veterinarians are in private practice; however, government, businesses, universities, and the military also employ veterinarians. In 2016, the median salary for practicing veterinarians was \$88,490. The median debt for a 2015 veterinary school graduate was \$156,480.

Most veterinary medicine students need to borrow to cover expenses, including tuition and the cost-of-living. The AAVMC also encourages students to consider the costs of owning animals

(dogs, cats, horses) during the years spent in veterinary school, as 75-80% of students bring pets. In order to secure loans, you should be sure to maintain a good credit rating throughout your college years.

What is the double registration program?

The double registration program between CVMCU and Cornell University undergraduates is approved for students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CAL S). It enables a qualified student to save one year in pursuit of the Bachelor and D.V.M. degrees. The program is intended for students who have been admitted to CVMCU after completing three years of undergraduate work and who have made sufficient progress on the Bachelor's Degree requirements. Certain courses taken in the College of Veterinary Medicine can be used to complete those requirements. Questions about the program may be directed to Cate Thompson, CAL S pre-health/pre-vet advisor in 145 Roberts Hall. See page 9 for more information.

Students are also encouraged to seek out information from CVMCU, including the *Pre-Vet Newsletter*. To subscribe, visit http://www.vet.cornell.edu/admissions/prevet_newsletter.cfm.

What guidance does Cornell give health careers-oriented undergraduates?

Cornell has a structured Health Careers Program. The Career Library and the health careers advisor in Barnes Hall provide information, orientation sessions, and advising for students in all colleges. The advisor has walk-in advising hours and scheduled appointments, and can also be reached by e-mail and telephone. Advising information is also available on the Health Careers webpage accessed through Cornell Career Services: career.cornell.edu.

Most of the questions freshmen, sophomores, and junior transfer students pose relate to academic requirements. It is best to address these questions to an advisor in your college or major.

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, CAL S Career Services, Roberts Hall

College of Arts and Sciences, Ana Adinolfi, 172 Goldwin Smith Hall

College of Engineering, Liane Fitzgerald, 167 Olin Hall

College of Human Ecology, Verdene Lee, 172 Martha Van Rensselaer Hall and

Office of Undergraduate Biology, 216 Stimson Hall

Several advisors are available depending on your question: Beth Howland, Megan Gallagher, Jeff McCaffrey, Colleen Kearns and student peer advisors.

Resources: A sample of books available in the Career Library, 103 Barnes Hall include:

American Animal Hospital Association Accredited Practice Directory

American Zoo and Aquarium Membership Directory

Careers with Animals, Ellen Shenk

Career Opportunities Working with Animals, Shelly Field

Extraordinary Jobs with Animals, Alecia Devantier & Carol Turkington

Get Into Veterinary School - Insights by an Admission Expert, Joseph Piekunka

The Everything Guide to Working with Animals, Michele Hollows & William Rives, VMD

Cornell Courses that Satisfy Veterinary School Requirements

Subject	Cornell University Courses
Biology	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Offered fall, spring and summer</i></p> BIOMG 1350 Introductory Biology: Cell and Developmental Biology AND BIOG 1440 <u>or</u> 1445* Introductory Biology: Comparative Physiology <i>*BIOG 1445 is an individualized instruction format course.</i> AND BIOG 1500 Investigative Biology Laboratory
English/Composition	<p>The English/ composition requirements of schools vary. Some schools require one semester while others require two semesters, some with a focus on English composition. Students are encouraged to check the requirements of specific veterinary schools. Most veterinary schools will accept First-Year Writing Seminars (FWS) in fulfillment of their writing requirement; however, writing-intensive courses from other disciplines may also be acceptable.</p> <p>Some veterinary schools also require a course in oral communication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COMM 210 Oral Communication (<i>offered fall, spring, summer</i>)
Biochemistry	<p><i>Any of the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIOMG 3310 Principles of Biochemistry: Proteins and Metabolism (<i>offered fall</i>) AND BIOMG 3320 Principles of Biochemistry: Molecular Biology (<i>offered spring</i>) • BIOMG 3300 Biochemistry, Individualized Instruction (<i>offered fall, spring</i>) • BIOMG 3350 Principles of Biochemistry: Proteins, Metabolism, and Molecular Biology (<i>offered spring</i>) • NS 3200 Introduction to Human Biochemistry (<i>offered fall</i>) • BIOMG 3330 Principles of Biochemistry: Proteins, Metabolism, and Molecular Biology (<i>offered summer</i>)
Advanced Life Sciences	<p><i>Requirements of veterinary schools vary. The following are common upper-level courses that may be required by some schools. Students are encouraged to check the requirements of schools to which they plan to apply.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIOMG 2800 Genetics Lecture (<i>offered fall, spring, summer</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ BIOMG 2801 Genetics Lab (<i>offered fall, spring, summer</i>) • BIOMI 2900 General Microbiology Lectures (<i>offered fall, spring, summer</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ BIOMI 2911 General Microbiology Laboratory (<i>offered fall, spring</i>) • NS 3410 Human Anatomy and Physiology (<i>offered spring</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ NS 3420 Human Anatomy and Physiology Laboratory (<i>offered spring</i>) • ANSC 2120 Animal Nutrition (<i>offered fall</i>)
General Chemistry	<p style="text-align: center;">Option 1</p> CHEM 2070 General Chemistry I (<i>offered fall, summer</i>) AND CHEM 2080 General Chemistry II (<i>offered spring, summer</i>)
	<p style="text-align: center;">Option 2</p> CHEM 2150 Honors General and Inorganic Chemistry (<i>offered fall</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ An accelerated one-semester course leading directly to organic chemistry ◦ An AP score of 5 on Chemistry is highly recommended ◦ Some medical schools require a full-year of general chemistry
	<p style="text-align: center;">Option 3</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>For Engineering Students Only</i></p> CHEM 2090 Engineering General Chemistry (<i>offered fall, spring</i>) AND CHEM 2080 General Chemistry II (<i>offered spring, summer</i>) OR CHEM 2150 Honors General and Inorganic Chemistry (<i>offered fall</i>)
Organic Chemistry	<p><i>Students should explore requirements of specific veterinary schools before choosing which option to pursue.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Option 1</p> CHEM 3570 Organic Chemistry for the Life Sciences (<i>offered fall, summer</i>) AND CHEM 3580 Organic Chemistry for the Life Sciences (<i>offered spring, summer</i>)

	<p>AND CHEM 2510 Introduction to Experimental Organic Chemistry (<i>offered fall, spring, summer</i>)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Option 2</u></p> <p>CHEM 3590 Honors Organic Chemistry I (<i>offered spring</i>) AND CHEM 3600 Honors Organic Chemistry II (<i>offered fall</i>) AND CHEM 2510 Introduction to Experimental Organic Chemistry (<i>offered fall, spring, summer</i>)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Option 3</u></p> <p>CHEM 3530 Principles of Organic Chemistry (<i>offered fall</i>) AND CHEM 2510 Introduction to Experimental Organic Chemistry (<i>offered fall, spring, summer</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A single-semester organic chemistry course o Some veterinary schools require a full-year of organic chemistry
Math	<p><i>Some veterinary schools require a semester of calculus and/or statistics. Students are encouraged to check the requirements of schools to which they plan to apply.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Calculus</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MATH 1106 Calculus for the Life and Social Sciences (<i>offered spring</i>) • MATH 1110 Calculus I (<i>offered fall, spring, summer</i>) • MATH 1910 Calculus for Engineers (<i>offered fall, spring, summer</i>) <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Statistics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STSCI 2150 Introductory Statistics for Biology (<i>offered fall, spring</i>) • BTRY 3010 Biological Statistics I (<i>offered fall</i>) • MATH 1710 Statistical Theory and Application in the Real World (<i>offered fall, spring</i>) • AEM 2100 Introductory Statistics (<i>offered fall</i>) • ILRST 2100 Introductory Statistics (<i>offered fall, winter, spring, summer</i>) • PSYCH 3500 Statistics and Research Design (<i>offered fall, summer</i>) • ECON 3130 Statistics and Probability (<i>offered fall</i>) • SOC 2010 Evaluating Statistical Evidence (<i>offered fall</i>) • ENGRD 2700 Basic Engineering Probability and Statistics (<i>offered fall, spring, summer</i>) • CEE 3040 Uncertainty Analysis in Engineering (<i>offered fall</i>) • PAM 2100 Introduction to Statistics (<i>offered spring</i>)
General Physics	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Option 1</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Individualized instruction, not calculus-based</i></p> <p>PHYS 1101 General Physics I (<i>offered fall, summer</i>) AND PHYS 1102 General Physics II (<i>offered spring, summer</i>)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Option 2</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Calculus-based</i></p> <p>PHYS 2207 Fundamentals of Physics I (<i>offered fall</i>) AND PHYS 2208 Fundamentals of Physics II (<i>offered spring</i>)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Option 3</u></p> <p>PHYS 1112 Physics I: Mechanics & Heat (<i>offered fall, spring, summer</i>) AND PHYS 2208 Fundamentals of Physics II (<i>offered spring</i>)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Option 4</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>For Engineering Students</i></p> <p>PHYS 1112 Physics I: Mechanics & Heat (<i>offered fall, spring, summer</i>) AND PHYS 2213 Physics II: Electromagnetism (<i>offered fall, spring, summer</i>) AND PHYS 2214 Physics III: Oscillations, Waves, and Quantum Physics (<i>offered fall, spring, summer</i>)</p> <p>* <i>Crossovers between 1101/2208 and 2207/1102 are acceptable.</i></p>

Specific Prerequisites for CVMCU

Subject	Cornell University Courses
English/Composition <i>Two semesters</i>	May be satisfied by a full-year of the First-Year Writing Seminars.
Biology	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Offered fall, spring, and summer</i></p> BIOMG 1350 Introductory Biology: Cell and Developmental Biology AND BIOG 1440 <i>or</i> 1445* Introductory Biology: Comparative Physiology AND BIOG 1500 Investigative Biology Laboratory AND BIOAP 1100 Domestic Animal Biology (<i>offered fall</i>)
Biochemistry <i>One semester required; two semesters recommended</i>	<p><i>Any of the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIOMG 3310 Principles of Biochemistry: Proteins and Metabolism (<i>offered fall</i>) AND BIOMG 3320 Principles of Biochemistry: Molecular Biology (<i>offered spring</i>) • BIOMG 3300 Biochemistry, Individualized Instruction (<i>offered fall, spring</i>) • BIOMG 3350 Principles of Biochemistry: Proteins, Metabolism, and Molecular Biology (<i>offered spring</i>) • NS 3200 Introduction to Human Biochemistry (<i>offered fall</i>)
Advanced Life Sciences <i>One semester</i>	Suggested courses include microbiology (general or bacteriology); immunology (basic immunology); physiology (animal/ comparative physiology, bacterial physiology, neurophysiology, cell physiology / histology, cell biology, endocrinology, developmental biology); and genetics (genetics, molecular genetics, developmental genetics, bacterial genetics, or genomics). 300-400 level course (junior- or senior-level). The exception is microbiology at the 200-level or above. One semester minimum.
General Chemistry <i>Two semesters with labs</i>	<p style="text-align: center;">Option 1</p> CHEM 2070 General Chemistry I (<i>offered fall, summer</i>) AND CHEM 2080 General Chemistry II (<i>offered spring, summer</i>)
Organic Chemistry <i>One semester</i>	<p><i>Any of the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHEM 3570 Organic Chemistry for the Life Sciences (<i>offered fall, summer</i>) • CHEM 3590 Honors Organic Chemistry I (<i>offered spring</i>) • CHEM 3530 Principles of Organic Chemistry (<i>offered fall</i>)
General Physics <i>Two semesters with labs</i>	<p style="text-align: center;">Option 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Individualized instruction, not calculus-based</i></p> PHYS 1101 General Physics I (<i>offered fall, summer</i>) AND PHYS 1102 General Physics II (<i>offered spring, summer</i>)

CVMCU Early Acceptance Program

The *Early Acceptance Program* gives exceptionally well qualified applicants the opportunity to obtain admission to veterinary school after completing their **sophomore year**. With admission to the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine secured, the successful applicant may use the time between acceptance and matriculation to pursue experience in areas of personal interest. Entry into the professional curriculum is expected after completion of the junior year. Admission to the program is based on outstanding academic performance in the first two years of college and the applicant's plan for the intended use of the third year in college. Completion of a baccalaureate degree prior to matriculation is not required.

Criteria for admission to this program are rigorous. Generally, applicants for this program have a GPA of 3.7 or better and GRE Verbal and Quantitative scores above the 80th percentile. It is expected that the GRE will be taken by May 1 of the application year to ensure the scores will be delivered from ETS by the application deadline. Applicants must also have completed at least one semester of organic chemistry *and* one semester of an upper-level biology, biochemistry, or physics course. Additionally, applicants must submit a written plan describing how the time between acceptance and matriculation will be spent. Examples of how the time may be spent include study in challenging courses, initiation or completion of a research project, or time spent in a unique life experience. This program is not intended to delay matriculation for reasons of economics, illness, or other personal hardships.

Applications for the Early Acceptance Program should **not** be sent through VMCAS.

The application and evaluation process for the program are as follows:

- College sophomores are eligible to apply at the end of the spring term of their second year for admission after their third year.
- Applications are available in March each year with a deadline of June 1. Supplemental information, such as letters of evaluation and transcripts from all colleges, are required. Visit the College of Veterinary Medicine's admissions web site for details www.vet.cornell.edu/admissions or email us at: vet_admissions@cornell.edu.
- The application and prerequisite requirements are the same as for the other applicants, except that all prerequisite courses must have been completed with a grade of B or better. Students who have not satisfied all of the prerequisite coursework must complete it before the end of spring term prior to matriculation.
- The GRE or MCAT must be in the admissions office by the June 1 deadline. Cornell's GRE code number is 2549 and MCAT code number is 993.
- Contact the Office of DVM Admissions (607) 253-3700 or vet_admissions@cornell.edu with questions about the program.

Application Components and Timing

VMCAS and non-VMCAS

VMCAS (Veterinary Medical College Admission Service) is a non-profit, centralized application service used by most veterinary colleges. VMCAS processes the application and sends the information to each VMCAS-participating school that the applicant has designated. The VMCAS application is web-based and can be found at aavmc.org. The application becomes available early in the summer each year. Even if you apply through VMCAS, individual veterinary schools may require you to submit some materials directly to their school.

In general, whether applying through VMCAS or completing a non-VMCAS school's application, the process involves application forms, essays or personal statements, transcripts, and letters of recommendation. The following information suggests how to proceed in these and related areas, but it may need to be tailored to meet the requirements of a particular school or the VMCAS application. These can vary from year to year.

Timing of the Application

The VMCAS deadline this year is September 15, 2017. Students should expect that the deadline will be similar in subsequent years. The VMCAS application, transcripts, and three letters of

recommendation must be received prior to the deadline. VMCAS representatives recommend that students submit their applications *one month* prior to the deadline to ensure that the verification process is completed in a timely manner.

Transcripts

Each student is responsible for requesting that a transcript be sent to individual veterinary schools (if non-VMCAS) and/or to VMCAS. Cornell transcripts can be requested through Student Center. Students are encouraged to order a personal copy of the transcript to check for errors and to help with entering coursework into the VMCAS application.

Transcripts for work completed at other post-secondary institutions are available from the registrar of those institutions. Students should send transcripts for additional academic work (i.e., the semesters following the VMCAS application), if requested by the schools. If these transcripts are not requested, you may send them at your discretion, depending on whether they enhance your application and if schools have indicated that it is acceptable to send additional materials.

First-Year Writing Seminars

Because some veterinary schools may not be familiar with the First-Year Writing Seminars, you may want to provide a statement that these courses are equivalent to English composition courses.

If a veterinary school you are applying to requires that the courses you are using to complete the English requirement have English in the title or course prefix, ask the John S. Knight Institute for Writing to prepare a statement for you to send to that veterinary school with the secondary application. Fill in all requested information at www.arts.cornell.edu/Knight-institute/fws/medschool.htm.

Personal Statement or Essay

VMCAS and many veterinary schools provide the opportunity for applicants to write three personal statements of no more than 1,000 characters (including spaces) each, in response to the following prompts (2017 applicants for 2018 matriculation):

1. There are many career choices within the veterinary profession. What are your future career goals and why?
2. In what ways do veterinarians contribute to society and what do you hope to contribute?
3. Considering the breadth of society that we serve as veterinarians today, what attributes do you believe are essential to be successful within the veterinary profession? Of these attributes, which do you possess and how have you demonstrated these in the past?

The VMCAS essay is an opportunity to help the admissions committee learn more about applicants, their interest in veterinary medicine, and their career goals. Applicants should use the essay to “come alive” to the reader and convey unique characteristics. When writing the statement, students should focus on one to three carefully selected topics and develop them using concrete examples from important experiences or events. Most students see this as an opportunity to expand on other portions of the application, to cover aspects not covered by the application form, and/or to explain the qualifications that set them apart; consequently, they invest time in writing their essay. Also, important personal circumstances that have affected a student’s academic background can be discussed. Some admissions officers indicate that an essay sometimes may be a deciding factor in granting an interview; it also may be the point of departure in the interview. Several sources of help with the statement or essays are available:

- A health careers advisor can give an opinion about whether the essay is generally appropriate.
- The Writing Workshop, 178 Rockefeller Hall, which is open during the school year until the end of study week can help with presenting ideas clearly. There may be a consultant available during the summer.
- Anyone skilled in these aspects of the English language; perhaps a roommate, a friend who is editor of the *Sun*, a teaching assistant, an English major, etc., can correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

- Reading the essay aloud can help to identify problems with the flow of words. Pauses and hesitations by the reader indicate problems with the clarity of the ideas or the writing.
- Unbiased persons, e.g., advisor, friend, non-science student who will be candid, probably not a parent, can comment on the quality of the essay.

Where to Apply

Some veterinary schools limit their applications to state residents. Candidates who want to determine their eligibility at given schools should use veterinary school web pages and *Veterinary Medical School Admission Requirements* (VMSAR), in the Career Library, 103 Barnes Hall.

Responsibilities of the Student

Students are responsible for assuring that the VMCAS application is complete and has been transmitted to the designated schools. Some schools maintain online sites where applicants can monitor the status of the application. All applicants are encouraged to keep a copy of the application and to refer to it prior to interviews.

Alternative Applications

Decisions about whether to apply to graduate and/or other alternative professional schools simultaneously with veterinary school or possibly the following year should be discussed with a health careers advisor.

Letters of Recommendation

Purpose of letters of recommendation

Letters of recommendation provide information and insight on personal qualities, such as professionalism and the academic record. Admissions committees want to hear from established professionals who will speak to a student's intellectual and human potential. The admissions office needs letters to evaluate an applicant's candidacy. An applicant's ability to secure a useful letter signifies the capacity to initiate, build, and sustain meaningful professional relationships, qualities that are essential to the effective practice of veterinary medicine.

Reference letters provide an objective, authoritative, and supportive external viewpoint on an applicant. They are called "recommendations" because they are expected to appreciate the candidate's strengths. A truly candid letter may comment on low points, unfortunate experiences, adversity, and obstacles. The supportive letter writer will point out these imperfections in the context of the positive qualities the applicant exhibits. When a letter writer is candid, the letter gains credibility. No one is perfect and the consummate letter writer acknowledges this while substantively supporting the applicant with anecdotes to back up generalizations.

Letter writers should refer to the fit between the applicant's strengths and a career in veterinary medicine. The practice of veterinary medicine requires professionals of good character who can work effectively under conditions of self-regulation, who have incorporated impeccable character standards, who know how to take personal responsibility, and who have a record of conducting confidential interpersonal communication.

Whom to ask for a letter of recommendation

Students should ask those with whom they are well acquainted and those who have shown they care about the students' academic and career goals. If in doubt about whom to ask, students should consult a health careers or faculty advisor or attend one of the many informational programs offered during the semester. Letters matter greatly in admission decisions. If students cannot think of three people who fit the criteria to be excellent personal referees, it may be wise to consider taking a "gap" or "bridge" year, during which relationships with strong, supportive mentors can be cultivated.

Which set of referees can help to build a balanced profile of an applicant's credentials and relevant experiences? One person will not be able to discuss all of the qualities of a successful applicant and, later, veterinary student. Taken together, the three letters of recommendation should cover many aspects of the applicant's credentials. Good sources of letters generally include a faculty member, your faculty advisor for more than a semester, a veterinary professional or professor for whom you've worked, an employer, club advisor, supervisor of voluntary activity or research experience, camp director, chaplain, coach, or other mentor.

In general, it is best to ask at least one instructor from the college years to write a letter of recommendation. Most admissions offices prefer at least one letter from this source. This referee's letter of recommendation will demonstrate that an applicant has the support of the University. A letter from a teaching or laboratory assistant is sufficient, but not optimal. If a graduate student writes the letter, s/he can ask the faculty member in charge of the course or lab to ratify and cosign it. Alternatively, if a professor does not know you well, you may ask a TA to submit notes to the professor upon which the letter can be based.

How to ask for a letter of recommendation

In general, students should ask for recommendations in a live conversation, in person. If necessary, ask by telephone or videoconference. E-mail is not an effective method from a strategic perspective. Here are four questions to pose to potential recommenders:

- "Would you be willing to write a letter of recommendation for me?"
- "Do you feel it can be a strong, supportive letter?"
- "May I make an appointment to come talk with you and review my qualifications?"
- "I'd like you to mention (fill in the blank) in my letter. Do you feel you could do that?" (The decision rests with the writer.)

If the answer to the first two questions is not an enthusiastic "yes," be patient and hear the person out, even if it feels awkward. The lack of enthusiasm may relate to the writer's own scarcity of time, or it may reflect an estimation of your candidacy. Both perspectives provide important information. At some point, you may indicate that you want to do further thinking before proceeding; or you may simply say, "No thank you. I'll try to find another recommender."

Discuss your decision to retain or waive FERPA access to the letter and make sure you have reached an understanding on this with the writer. Also make sure the recommender knows the due date for the letter and will be able to meet it and the procedure for transmitting the letter to the appropriate destination.

Material to provide for recommenders

- A résumé or summary including in some detail the development of your interest in veterinary medicine and career goals.
- A list of the schools that the student intends to apply to and any special programs that the school may offer which the student is interested in.
- A written statement regarding the decision to retain or waive FERPA right of access to the letter.

How many letters of recommendation are required

VMCAS applications must contain at least three, and no more than six, letters of recommendation.

Transfer students

Transfer students should read the Transfer Guidelines on the Health Careers web page and listen to the "Junior Transfer Orientation" in the Media Programs link of that webpage. They are encouraged to speak with a health careers advisor to get advice on their letter options.

Waiving or Not Waiving Access to Letters: FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 requires that students be advised of their rights concerning educational records, such as letters of recommendation.

FERPA gives important rights, including:

- The right of students to inspect their student records.
- The right to challenge incorrect information in those records.
- The right to keep student records private.

Because FERPA gives students these rights, neither Cornell University nor other institutions or organizations can require you to waive these rights. University policy on access and release of student records is stated at the CU policy website.

When you establish a file for letters of recommendation you should consider your FERPA right to access the letter(s). If you decide to waive access, inform the letter writer in writing, that you have chosen to do so. If you do not provide this information, by default you have not waived this right. You can discuss this choice with those writing your letters of recommendation, and the following factors may be useful in making your decision.

Factors to consider in deciding to waive access

- If the recommender knows the student well and has said he/she can write a letter in support of his/her candidacy, the chances are slight that inaccuracies or unfair statements will be presented in the letter.
- An employer or a member of an admissions committee might tentatively draw one or more of the following conclusions:
 - The evaluation may be more candid if the writer knew that the candidate would not see it. As a result, more weight may be assigned to such letters.
 - The candidate has nothing to conceal.
 - The candidate did not feel it was necessary to view the letter before it was sent.
 - The candidate does not wish to exercise his/her civil rights in this way.

Factors to consider in deciding not to waive access

- A potential recommender may choose not to write a letter unless a student waives the FERPA right of access.
- Students need to be prepared to explain their reasons for the choice to retain access during interview(s).
- An employer or a member of an admissions committee at a graduate or professional school receiving the letter might tentatively draw one or more of the following conclusions:
 - The evaluation may be less candid, as the writer knew that the candidate might see it. As a result, these letters may carry less weight in the decision-making process.
 - The candidate did not waive access in order to determine that recipients received full information.
 - The candidate wanted to discuss the letter with the recommender/evaluator before it was put in final draft.
 - The candidate feels a moral obligation to exercise his/her civil rights.
- Students will have an idea of the information schools/employers have and, therefore, can prepare for interviews accordingly.
- Students may have a chance of learning from any feedback a letter provides.
- It may relieve stress and anxiety to know exactly what has been said.
- Factual mistakes in the letter may be corrected.
- If a student concludes that a letter is unfavorable, he or she can choose not to use the letter.

Interviews: Overview, Techniques, and Tips

Interviews are an important part of the veterinary school application process. These interviews may be in one of two formats: traditional or multiple mini interviews (MMI). A handful of veterinary schools, including UC Davis, Michigan State, and Virginia-Maryland Regional, use the MMI format. Consider interviewing as a skill you need to develop, and use the following information to become a good interviewee.

Overview

In order to be successful in a veterinary school interview, you need to make a convincing argument for:

- Why you want to be a veterinarian,
- How you are qualified to study veterinary medicine, and
- Why you want to study at the school at which you are interviewing.

You need to demonstrate enthusiasm and confidence. It is not enough to have written about your desire to study veterinary medicine in your personal statement. You must convince the medical school that you are the right candidate as schools have far too many qualified applicants to choose from. The interview is where admissions officers distinguish between these students and create a balanced, diverse incoming class.

Interview techniques

- Develop a firm handshake.
- Maintain eye contact.
- If asked a complex or long question, restate it before answering.
- Take time to think before answering; don't be afraid of short pauses.
- Learn to generate answers that are neither too long (over two minutes) nor too short (under twenty seconds).
- Help the interviewer. Signal with a gesture or a phrase when coming to the end of an answer.
- Frame the answer; for example, start with, "I see three main points...."
- Use "bridging" techniques to introduce and to expand on information. Answer the question asked, then "bridge" to introduce highlighted information. For example, if asked about research experience, an appropriate response may be, "Yes, I did research for two summers....(then bridging) "Additionally, I was a peer drug and alcohol educator...."

Interview tips

- Arrive early, but no more than ten minutes before the appointment.
- Students should treat all of those met on the day of the interview with the utmost respect. Every interaction is a part of the interview and is subject to analysis.
- Expect to be nervous at the outset. Nervousness is a natural function that can elevate performance.
- Emphasize the positive.
- Ask for explanations if questions are confusing and remember it is okay to say, "I don't know."
- Students should not belittle themselves or their experiences, with comments like, "I was just a volunteer...."
- Let enthusiasm and self-confidence show; be yourself, relax, and smile.
- **Respond to all interview invitations.**

Your Conduct and Credit Rating

The VMCAS application used by the majority of veterinary schools in the United States includes questions related to felony and misdemeanor convictions as well as academic infractions (academic probation, institutional action) on its application. Applicants must be forthcoming with this information. Disclosure of violations does not disqualify students from veterinary schools, however failure to disclose violations may result in a rescinded acceptance offer. Many veterinary schools also conduct criminal background checks. Trustworthiness and good judgment are essential qualities for someone who seeks to enter a health profession. Throughout your college career, be aware that actions that reflect negatively on your character, judgment, or honesty may seriously diminish your chances of admission to a health professions school.

Also, most applicants must borrow to pay for veterinary school. To secure loans, you will need to have a good credit rating. Debts other than long-term educational debts (e.g. credit card debt, car loans and other unpaid bills) must be responsibly repaid before entering veterinary school. Veterinary schools have rescinded an acceptance when a student's credit rating was poor.

Year-By-Year Timelines

All pre-health students are encouraged to use the materials in the Career Library, 103 Barnes Hall, and on the web to determine specific requirements for course work, standardized tests, and application procedures. The following timelines provide general guidelines for most health careers, with specific references to veterinary medicine.

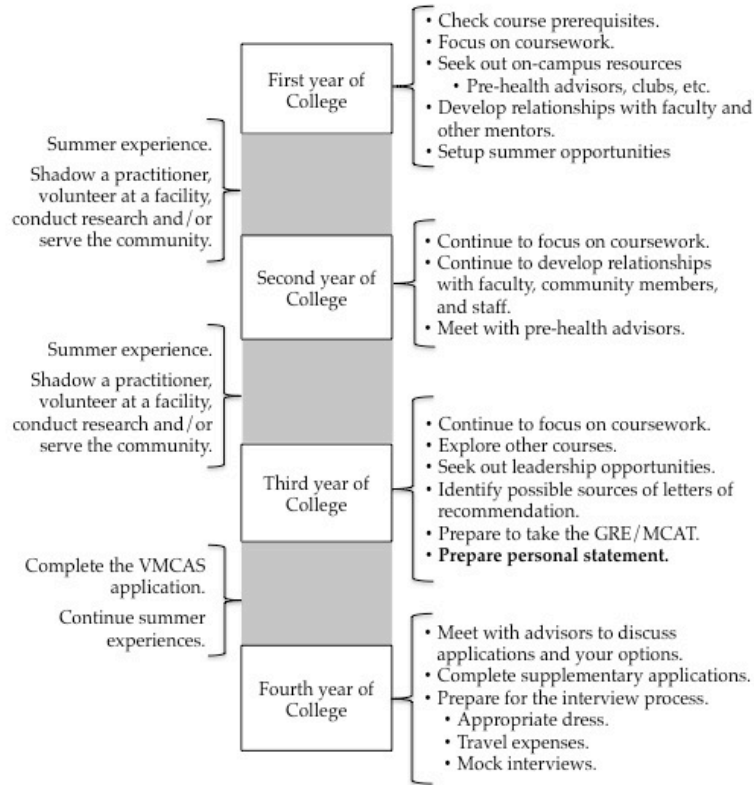
Throughout your undergraduate career:

- Plan your course schedule in consultation with an academic advisor.
- Attend programs featuring professional school admissions speakers, practitioners, and others.
- Check out student health career organizations, volunteer and research opportunities, summer jobs, and internships to test and develop your career interests.

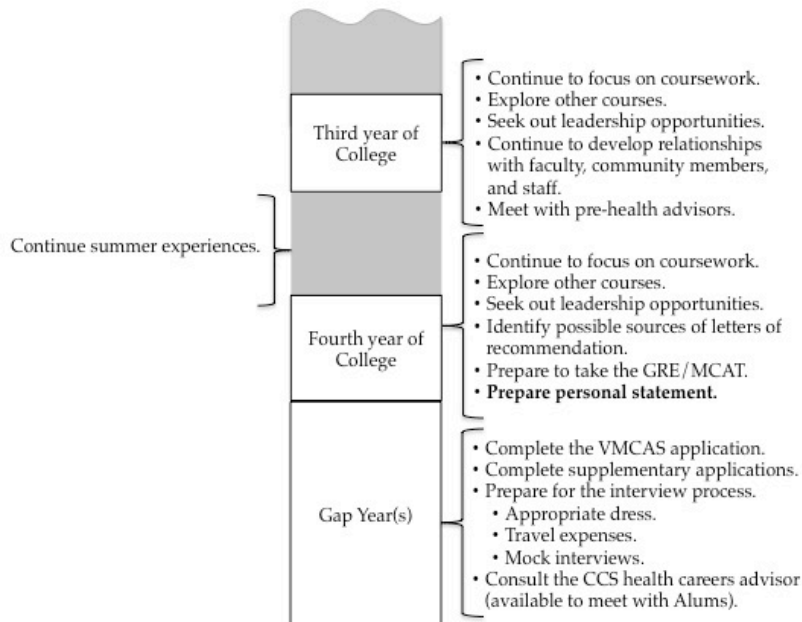
- Develop and frequently update an alternative career option to pursue if you don't go to a health professional school or if you want a gap year or two.

The specific path a student takes through the undergraduate career to matriculation into professional school is varied. The pathway that may seem “traditional,” in which students graduate from Cornell in the spring and matriculate in the fall, usually requires applications in the summer preceding the fourth year of college. Students who take one or more “gap” year(s) after graduation from Cornell follow a different timeline.

“TRADITIONAL” TIMELINE – APPLICATION AFTER THIRD YEAR OF COLLEGE



ONE GAP YEAR TIMELINE – APPLICATION AFTER FOURTH YEAR OF COLLEGE



Class Profiles and Applications to CVMCU

Class Profile

	Class of 2013	Class of 2014	Class of 2015	Class of 2016	Class of 2017
Median Age	21	21	22	21	22
Median GPA	3.72	3.70	3.72	3.75	3.70
Median Yrs. of Ed.	4	4	5	5	5
Median GRE	1335	1330	1320	1350	321
GRE-Verbal	600	600	590	620	162
GRE-Quantitative	735	730	730	730	159
Male	20	15	24	20	16
Female	72	74	78	82	83
New York	50	56	55	54	60
Contract	0	0	0	0	0
Other	42	33	47	48	39
Cornell	30	22	23	21	17
Non-Cornell	62	68	79	81	82
Biology	43	40	46	40	47
Agriculture/ Animal Science	37	32	33	30	24
Other	12	17	23	32	28

Health Careers Advisors

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Director, Health Careers Advising Program
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