Stroud High School

Applying to Study Veterinary Medicine and Science
Studying Veterinary Medicine and Science at University

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1. Why Do You Want to Become a Vet?

Veterinary Medicine and Science is a popular career choice and competition for places is fierce. There are less than 900 places available between the seven universities that currently offer degrees in veterinary medicine and science. It is important therefore that your personal reasons for choosing to become a vet are well thought through.

Vet schools will expect you to be able to discuss, defend and explain your motivation for wanting to be a vet clearly and convincingly. In addition to a rigorous selection process, if accepted onto the course, you will be expected to perform certain tasks that you may find you are not able to carry out (see ‘Challenges’ below).

Vet schools are looking for people with a genuine interest in veterinary medicine, who have an understanding of all areas of the veterinary profession and who are willing to get involved practically. Key attributes of a good vet include:

- an aptitude for and interest in sciences / life-long interest in scientific learning
- a thirst for knowledge and a love of problem solving (it is highly unlikely that you will know the answers to all the problems you face in a single day; you may not even be able to find the answers in a book; this is where your ability to think on your feet and make difficult decisions really comes into its own)
- excellent communication skills (ability to communicate both sensitively and professionally with owners, pets (i.e. non-verbal communication) and all the different members of your clinical team
- physical strength and dexterity (handling animals of all shapes and sizes safely and humanely and a fine-tuned manual dexterity for performing surgical tasks such as suturing and biopsies)
- a caring ethos (compassion, tolerance, patience, empathy)
- a sense of social responsibility
- self-motivation, self-confidence, self-reliance and initiative
- good personal organisational skills and time management skills
- ability to handle considerable amounts of paperwork

1 A new veterinary school has recently opened at the University of Surrey in Guildford. The school’s veterinary degree is not currently approved however the University of Surrey and the RCVS are working closely together to ensure that the new degree meets RCVS requirements and that graduates will be eligible for registration. The RCVS plans to undertake a visit in 2017, when the first cohort of students have reached their third year, and again in 2019, just before the first cohort finishes.
2. Challenges

Before applying to become a vet, it is important that you have a realistic understanding of the challenges you will be facing. There are many aspects to the role of a vet including diagnosing and controlling animal diseases, treating sick and injured animals, preventing transmission of disease to humans, advising owners on looking after their pets and livestock, and being active in wildlife preservation and conservation.

The first couple of years of your degree will focus on basic science, including physiology and biochemistry followed by more practical aspects in the clinical years. The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) requires all students to complete 38 weeks of Extra Mural Studies (EMS) to be completed during holidays. This consists of 12 weeks on farms, 24 weeks at veterinary practices, one week at an abattoir and one week at a veterinary laboratory agency.

On completion of your degree, you will qualify as an ‘omni-competent vet’. You will then be expected to learn about all areas of veterinary medicine including:

- post-mortems
- dissections
- rectal examinations
- abattoir visits
- small animal surgery

The RCVS states that “It is essential that you only apply to veterinary school if you are prepared to do all of this”.

Below are the common reasons why students drop out of veterinary school or why students stop practising after qualifying as vets. Take time to think about them and plan how you will face such challenges as you may be asked about them at interview.

- pressure of continuous exams and testing
- pressure of high level of responsibility
- inability to make difficult decisions
- long working hours / demanding workload
- high level of commitment
- difficult clients
- financial pressures preventing the best care for an animal
- trying to get the work-life balance right
3. Qualifications

For students from England, Wales and Northern Ireland, UK universities offering veterinary medicine and science accept applications that demonstrate a combination of GCSEs, AS levels and A levels. Good grades in science subjects are a key component of academic qualifications.

**GCSEs**
- applicants should have achieved a majority of A*/A grades

**A Levels**
- AAA is the minimum entry criteria for 6/7 UK universities (AAB at Nottingham)
- Biology and/or Chemistry are mandatory at ALL UK universities
- If only one of Biology or Chemistry is offered, a second science or Maths is required
4. Work Experience

In addition to your academic qualifications, it is essential that you undertake work experience across a wide variety of animal-related industries prior to applying – it is a key element to being accepted onto the course and will provide you with an understanding of what it takes to be a vet and that you have considered whether the demands of a veterinary career is for you. Ideally you should complete placements in Year 11 and Year 12. Examples include:

- spending time at large and small animal veterinary practices
- spending time on livestock farms (dairying and lambing are particularly useful)
- spending time at other animal establishments, for example, zoos, kennels, catteries, wildlife centres, pig farms, poultry farms and stables
- spending a day at an abattoir is recommended
- experience gained in veterinary or medical laboratories is also encouraged to help candidates appreciate the scientific basis of veterinary medicine

During your work experience remember to keep a log of:

- what you saw
- what you did
- what you learned

Referring back to your notes will help when you come to write your application and will also help you prepare for interviews as it provides source material for discussion.
5. Other Preparation

The following will help improve the chances of a successful application.

- Regularly looking at the British Veterinary Association website
- Regularly looking at the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons website
- Regularly reading Veterinary Practice magazine
- Check the entry criteria for the universities you are interested in applying to as each will have its own specific requirements
- Details of the entry requirements at each university in the United Kingdom are published annually on the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) website [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)
- Please see Appendix 1 for a summary of current entry requirements for UK universities
To study veterinary medicine and science, you have to make an application to the veterinary school of your choice through UCAS (www.ucas.com). The deadline for applying to study veterinary medicine and science is **15 October**. On the UCAS form you can list up to five choices, however only four of these can be for veterinary medicine and science.

You must look at the prospectus for your preferred veterinary schools so you understand the nature of the courses offered. Each university/course is unique, so do your research. The following universities offer veterinary medicine and science:

- University of Bristol
- University of Cambridge
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Glasgow
- University of Liverpool
- University of Nottingham
- Royal Veterinary School (University of London)
- University of Surrey

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## 7. Admission Tests

In addition to application through UCAS, certain universities require additional information/admissions tests to be completed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>All UCAS candidates must complete a Work Experience Summary (WES) prior to the deadline of 1 November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Veterinary School</td>
<td>BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>Applicants under consideration will be asked to complete a work experience questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nottingham</td>
<td>Applicants will be asked to provide Further Information by accessing an online questionnaire to give examples or evidence which illustrate or support the possession of the following attributes - communication and motor skills - personal attitude and attributes - an insight into a veterinary career (an appropriate and realistic view of the role of a veterinary surgeon) - sound reasons for wanting to study Veterinary Medicine In addition, applicants will need to take the Situational Judgement Test (SJT) which is accessible through the online questionnaire for which applicants are sent specific log in details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrey (from September 2016 subject to approval from RCVS)</td>
<td>Applicants proceeding to stage 2 will have their questionnaires graded. Applicants are given 10 days from the email sent date to complete and submit the questionnaire. The on-line questionnaire is designed to enable you to demonstrate your current ability, knowledge and skills including: - insight into the Veterinary Profession including current topical issues, medical developments and research - motivation for wanting to study veterinary medicine and an understanding of the personal commitment required to study this programme - understanding of the different areas of veterinary medicine and research and your potential contribution to the profession - understanding of the personal attributes required of a Veterinary Surgeon and consideration of both the positive and negative aspects of the profession - communication skills; (including listening, writing and speaking) and the ability to work comfortably within a team - animal handling skills and experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT)
The BioMedical Admissions Test is required for applicants who wish to study veterinary medicine and science at the University of Cambridge and the Royal Veterinary School. The BMAT assesses a candidate’s potential in an academically demanding undergraduate biomedical degree. The BMAT is a subject-specific admissions test for applicants to medicine, veterinary medicine and similar courses at universities. It consists of a 2-hour, pen-and-paper test divided into three sections and does not require a lot of extra study as it is a test of skills and knowledge that learners are expected to have already. The test is designed to be challenging, in order to discriminate effectively between applicants for university courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Questions/Task</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aptitude and Skills</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>35 multiple-choice questions</td>
<td>Solve problems, understand arguments, analyse data and make inferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Knowledge and Applications</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>27 multiple-choice questions</td>
<td>Apply what you have learned from studying non-specialist Science and Mathematics at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Task</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>One writing task from a choice of four</td>
<td>Select, develop and organise ideas, communicate effectively in writing and present your ideas clearly and concisely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Past papers can be found at:
http://www.admissionstestingservice.org/for-test-takers/bmat/preparing-for-bmat/

Situational Judgement Test
The Situational Judgement Test (SJT) is only used by the University of Nottingham and is designed to assess individuals’ judgement regarding situations encountered in a target role. It tests interpersonal oriented skills and ethical values rather than knowledge or clinical skills. The test lasts 30mins and can only be completed in one sitting. Applicants are presented with a set of hypothetical but relevant scenarios associated with the veterinary profession and asked to make judgements about possible responses. Applicants’ responses are evaluated to provide a picture of their situational judgement in that context.

The competency framework consists of four attributes:
- empathy and building client relationships
- professional integrity and trust
- resilience
- team work

A rating response format is used on a scale of 1 to 4 where applicants will be asked to either rate the appropriateness of a series of options in response to the scenario or rate the importance of a series of options. The responses are evaluated against a pre-determined automated scoring key.
Your interview is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your awareness of what studying to become a vet will entail. You will usually face questions about your motivation to study veterinary medicine and science, your understanding of the course, your work at school, hobbies and personal interests, as well as having to produce evidence of your academic achievements.

Qualities that vet schools are looking for include:

- interest in veterinary science
- awareness of current issues in animal welfare
- knowledge of the scope of careers in veterinary science
- interests outside veterinary science
- school/college activities
- evidence of initiative
- non-academic achievements

## Panel Interview

A panel interview usually consists of either one, two or three or more interviewers. The panel interview format consists of question and answer or directed conversation aimed to gain insight into the applicant’s personality and suitability.

There are two general approaches taken to the informal conversational interview:

| Non-guided | In this format there are no pre-determined interview questions. Interviewers come up with questions during the course of the session in order to facilitate a natural conversation |
| Guided     | Certain questions are pre-determined, but there is flexibility in terms of how they are asked. The interviewers may come up with additional questions during the course of the meeting. Although this approach is slightly more regimented, it also encourages conversation |

In addition, there are two general settings:

| Panel | The interview team often consists of a group of 2-3 people; classically, the panel is comprised of a combination of university-associated professionals, students, and community members. |
| One-to-One | One faculty-member or student interviews the applicant |

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3 In the November prior to year of entry, Stroud High School arranges for a mock interview with a local practitioner.
Multiple Mini Interviews (MMI)

Multiple mini interviews consist of a series of short, structured interview stations used to assess non-cognitive qualities including cultural sensitivity, maturity, teamwork, empathy, reliability, and communication skills.

- Prior to the start of each mini interview rotation, candidates receive a question/scenario and have a short period of time to prepare an answer.
- Upon entering the interview room, the candidate has a short exchange with an interviewer/assessor.
- At the end of each mini interview, the interviewer evaluates the candidate’s performance while the applicant moves to the next station.
- This pattern is repeated through a number of rotations.

Although participants must relate to the scenario posed at each station, it is important to note that MMIs are not intended to test specific knowledge in the field. Instead, the interviewers evaluate each candidate’s thought process and ability to think on his or her feet. As such, there are no right or wrong answers to the questions posed in MMIs, but each applicant should consider the question from a variety of perspectives. Note that each university has a different format for MMIs – please check their websites for details.
9. Useful Websites

- Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
  http://www.rcvs.org

- British Veterinary Association
  http://www.bva.co.uk

- Veterinary Practice magazine
  http://www.veterinary-practice.com

- Veterinary Record
  http://veterinaryrecord.bmj.com/

- Vets Online

- BMAT
  http://www.admissionstestingservice.org/for-test-takers/bmat/about-bmat/

**UNIVERSITIES**

- University of Bristol
  http://www.bris.ac.uk/vetscience

- University of Cambridge
  http://www.vet.cam.ac.uk

- University of Edinburgh
  http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/vet/studying/bachelor-vet-medicine

- University of Glasgow
  http://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/vet

- University of Liverpool
  https://www.liv.ac.uk/veterinary-science

- University of Nottingham
  http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/vet/index.aspx

- Royal Veterinary School (University of London)
  http://www.rvc.ac.uk/study/undergraduate

- University of Surrey
  http://www.surrey.ac.uk/vet

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## Appendix 1 – Entry Requirements for UK Universities
(see university websites for more details)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Admissions Test</th>
<th>A Level Grades</th>
<th>Mandatory Subjects at A Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>Biology and Chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>BMAT</td>
<td>A<em>A</em>A</td>
<td>Chemistry and two of Biology/Human Biology, Maths, Physics (advisable to have three sciences plus maths but not compulsory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>Biology and Chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A*AA</td>
<td>Biology and Chemistry and a third subject which is preferably a science subject. Art, Drama, Music or PE are not acceptable as a third subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>Biology and another science-related subject (e.g. Geology, Maths, Physics, Psychology). If Chemistry is not offered at A level, it must be offered at AS level minimum Grade B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nottingham</td>
<td>SJT</td>
<td>AAB</td>
<td>Biology/Human Biology and Chemistry (Grade A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Veterinary School</td>
<td>BMAT</td>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>Biology/Human Biology and Chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Surrey</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>Biology and Chemistry</td>
</tr>
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“a learning partnership valuing respect, personal best

...and a spirit of fun.”

Stroud High School
Beards Lane
Cainscross Road
Stroud
Glos
GL5 4HF

Tel no: 01453 764441
Fax no: 01453 756304
www.stroudhigh.gloucs.sch.uk

Examination centre no: 57035
UCAS no: 510946