



New Zealand Certificate in Animal Healthcare Assisting (Level 4) (Companion Animals)

Information on Work Experience at Animal Facilities and Clinics

Successful completion of this programme requires a minimum of 240 hours work experience at an animal facility although we encourage you to do more than this to gain experience and confidence. 80 hours must be completed at a companion animal veterinary clinic and the remaining 160 hours can be completed at an animal facility such as an animal charity, pet shop or boarding facility. You may need to access more than one animal facility in order to complete the practical component of the programme.

Acceptable experiences:

Veterinary Clinics

For this programme you need at least 80 hours of work experience in a companion animal clinic. Placements at veterinary clinics are highly sought and therefore need to be highly valued. So that you get the most out of your in-clinic time it is preferred that you spend the first half of your programme (i.e. one semester for full-time learners, or the first year for part-time learners) at other animal facilities first and the second half at a veterinary clinic. This also ensures that your current learning aligns with your work experience as well.

SPCA

Most SPCA's welcome volunteers and will provide you with some training in return for your commitment to sign up for a minimum length of time (often six months minimum). You can gain valuable experience in health and safety, animal handling and communication (with people and animals) and usually the opportunity to work with different species of animals, plus become involved in helping your community.

Animal Shelters

Animal shelters are usually charities and may be happy to have volunteers. They often deal with one species (usually cats or dogs) so you may need to seek a different experience to gain experience with other animals. The shelter needs to be properly set up as a facility – foster homes are not acceptable.

Boarding Kennels and Catteries

Most kennels and catteries are privately owned. Facilities will vary but you will probably be limited to dealing with just dogs and/or cats. They still offer valuable experience in health & safety, hygiene, and handling experience with dogs and/or cats, although you will need to seek a different experience to gain experience with other species.

Pet Shops

Pet shops may give you access to a variety of species but tend to be busy places. You may not have much

opportunity to handle animals but this could be used as a second experience through the year for some of your experience hours.

Dog Grooming/Doggy day-care

These are usually privately run and owned and may be busy. Again, you will need to source an additional experience to gain the necessary experience with other species. These facilities are likely to provide good opportunities for dog handling.

Things that are helpful to know

- We prefer you to undertake a day per week at the facility so that you can learn the theory alongside your practical experience. Some facilities may prefer work experiences in chunks. Discuss options with us if you are not sure. We will accept variations on the ideal 1 day per week, but prefer the work experience hours to be spread if possible.
- Hours can start being recorded after you have successfully completed the first course of the programme.
- Facilities are not paid to supervise you or help train you. For this reason it is important to be prepared and organised *before* you start your placement.
- Some facilities may not want to commit to all of the hours you need. Make them aware that they can change their mind at any time if they decide not to continue. You could also politely accept whatever they can offer, and look for a second experience to complete the hours you need.
- While we can't organise the work experience for you, we may be able to offer suggestions in your area. We can also call the facility to confirm your study once you have contacted them and answer any questions they may have.

How to approach potential work experiences

Start with a telephone call or a visit. If visiting, take a copy of the "NZCAHCA Introduction for Work Experience letter" with you. It doesn't matter whether you are telephoning or visiting; smile, be sincere and be humble in your approach.

Make a first contact phone call

- Call at a time you think is likely to be quieter (early afternoon is often best).
- Introduce yourself and see if it is possible to arrange a time to come in and discuss possible work experience. Let them know during this phone call that there is no expectation or obligation to take you on.

Contacting in person

- Visit the facility at an agreed time – don't just turn up.
- Present yourself neatly – long hair tied back, conservative jewellery and make-up. First impressions count!
- Take the Introductory Letter with you. This lets them know that you are enrolled in the New Zealand Certificate in Animal Care and will have completed introductory courses in animal handling, husbandry, behaviour, health and safety, ethics, and hygiene. It also sets out expectations of you as a student and the type of tasks you will need to be involved in.

If the facility says no, don't be too disheartened. Thank them for the opportunity to speak with them and try another facility.

Tips for Getting the Most Out Of Your Work Experience

Please note: We request feedback and evaluation from your supervisor for each Clinical Skills Course.

Evidence of poor professionalism (e.g. constant lateness, lack of confidentiality, poor attitude) can prevent you from passing your Clinical Skills courses.

- Once you have secured a work placement, make sure you contact them closer to the time you are about to start and confirm start and finish times. Expect to stay for a full day.
- Check where they would like you to park your car if this applies. Do not park in the facility car park unless instructed to, this is for clients.
- Be ready to start on time and stay until the time you have organised with the placement – **do not arrive late or ask to leave early.**
- Introduce yourself at reception and then wait for the supervisor to come out to get you.
- Before you start any work placement, you should be given a tour of the facility and an induction. This may include reading and signing work placement hazard register.
- **Do not attend placement if you are sick.** ALWAYS telephone your work placement and let them know if you are sick or unable to attend. Frequent sick days will be investigated by your Learning Advisor.
- Wear your Otago Polytechnic polo shirt/scrub top and name badge, long pants and closed in shoes, short nails hair tied back.
- **Do not touch animals in cages or get them out of cages without permission.**
- **Do not use your mobile phone in the facility, except during scheduled breaks.**
- If you are asked to help with something take the opportunity and ensure you follow all instructions correctly. Always wait to be asked to do something or check if you can do tasks.
- Show initiative and get involved whenever possible. Always say “yes” if you are given an opportunity but do communicate if you need help to complete the task. You are not expected to be an expert!
- Consider asking your supervisor for a list of tasks that you can do yourself if there are quiet times. Suggestions may include restocking supplies from the storeroom, refilling cotton wool, doing the laundry, wiping down benches and cupboard doors, checking and cleaning out litter trays/cages. Aim to add more and more tasks to your list each week as you become confident and independent, making sure that you always follow the facility protocols.
- Be aware if work placements have concerns about your performance, attendance, time management, following instructions etc. they will contact us.
- If you require an assessment skill to be signed off by your supervisor always ensure that you have completed it more than once, and that you are prepared.
- During the end of each work placement day, reflect on your time and ask yourself:
 - What did I do well today?
 - What could I improve on for next time?

- What could I add to my skills list for next work placement?
- What do I need to review in my learning resources to ensure that I understand the theory behind tasks I did today?
- Let your supervisor know what you are learning each week so all staff are aware and can provide support for you.
- **Try to meet with your supervisor once a fortnight. At this time, you can discuss:**
 - How are things going for the facility with you being there on work placement?
 - What are you doing well and what you could improve on?
 - What areas you are working on with your study that week.
- We recommend you consider taking in morning tea (a packet of nice biscuits or some home baking) as a thank you during your work placement in recognition of the support the facility is providing you.