

WHAT TO EXPECT ON YOUR FIRST DAY AT YOUR WORK PLACEMENT



Ensure once you have secured a work placement that you touch-base with the veterinary clinic closer to the time you are about to start and confirm start and finish times.

Check where they would like you to park your car, if this applies. Do not park in the veterinary clinic 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 and/or ask to leave early.

If you have not been to a work placement at a veterinary clinic before, remember they are very busy places. 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 veterinary clinic and induction. This may include reading and signing work placement hazard register.

Always wear your Otago Polytechnic polo shirt and name badge, long pants and closed in shoes, short nails hair tied back. This has been requested from veterinary clinics so clients are aware you are training and not a staff member.

Ensure that you are punctual and be prepared to follow instructions and help as and when required. If you are unsure, make sure you ask.

You will have covered Health and Safety, hygiene, animal welfare and expectations and professionalism in a veterinary clinic and you must at all times adhere to these. It is extremely important that you maintain confidentiality at all times. Check out the **Code of Confidentiality** you agreed to on your Supporting Information document if you would like to refresh yourself on this.

Do not pat or get animals out of cages without permission.

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. Even if you have completed a task or tasks and had them signed off, you must still continue to practice these tasks to ensure you gain confidence and competency in the task/s.

- **Example** – this week you want to practice anaesthetic machine assembly/disassembly and leak testing. You review the notes and resources provided to you before work placement. Then you say to your supervisor “After we have finished surgery today, would it be ok if I had a go leak testing and assembling the anaesthetic machine?” If, when you are doing it you come across something you are unfamiliar with you could ask then. In this scenario, you have shown understanding of the busy day, respect for the staff/patients and initiative.
- **Example** – “This week I’d really like to practice drawing up liquid medications into a syringe. Once surgery is finished, please could I use one of these old syringes and this old bottle (which you could fill with tap water) to do this?”. Same situation – respect, consideration and initiative.

Show initiative and get involved whenever possible, even if you are just there picking up the occasional syringe wrapper. Students who are always showing that they are keen to help, are the ones who are helped in turn by staff. Always say “yes” if you are asked if you would like a go, but ensure that you clearly communicate if you need help and supervision to complete the task.

Be aware if work placements have concerns about your performance, attendance, time management, following instructions etc. they will quite happily contact us and voice their concerns, sometimes complaints, and ask us to speak with you.

Consider developing a list of tasks with your supervisor that you can complete between work placements. Suggestions may include restocking syringe and needle supplies from the storeroom, refilling cotton wool

balls, wiping down benches and cupboard doors, checking and cleaning out litter trays/cages, undertaking washing and hanging this out. Stock shelves in retail (remembering oldest stock to the front, newest to the back). Aim to add more and more tasks to your list each week as you become confident and independent at tasks making sure that you always follow the veterinary protocols e.g. cleaning a surgical kit.

If you require a task or tasks to be signed off by your supervisor always ensure that you have completed this task more than once, and that you feel competent. You can also ask the supervisor, if they have time if they could review and provide you with feedback on tasks that you know you will need to have signed off, to ensure that you are undertaking the task correctly. This means once you come to having the task signed off, the supervisor will know what you have to do and you will also feel happier being watched to undertake the task as you will have practised and been watched previously.

It is important that you realize that many veterinary clinics will be using work placement as an opportunity to trial you for a potential employment should a position arise. Think of your work placement as a very long job interview.

During the end of each veterinary clinic work placement day, ask yourself questions such as:

- 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 and skills I was expected to undertake today, or why a particular process happens a particular way?

Always check your assessment calendar weekly and make sure that your supervisor has a copy of this and knows what you are learning each week so they can help at the veterinary clinic around these particular areas. Some students provide their work placement their weekly schedule, or write on the notice board what areas they are covering at the moment, so all staff are aware and can also provide support for you.

Ensure that you meet with your supervisor at least once a fortnight. At this time you can discuss:

- In the early days expect to be getting settled, learning routines and going through induction and health and safety documents.
- Later on when you are more settled in the veterinary clinic discussions could focus on your current learning and how they could best support you. Remember any additional support will be on top of general kennel cleaning, wiping tables etc., not in lieu of. Remember cleaning makes up a large proportion of a veterinary nurse and assistant's role.
- Communicate requirements for video clips early so clinic is aware of them coming up. (See additional details for video assessments).
- How things are going for the veterinary clinic with you being there on work placement?
- What you are doing well and what you could improve on.
- What areas you are working on with your study that week?
- What assessments are coming up and if there are any areas that you could potentially require support from the veterinary clinic. Making sure the veterinary clinic is aware of up and coming requirements. Please do not turn up to work placement on a day an assessment is due and expect them to support you with collecting assessment evidence. For instance, you could show them your assessment so they are aware of what you are required to undertake especially if video or photographic evidence is required and complete some advanced planning with the staff that support you.

Your veterinary clinic will be provided with your practicum book, supervisor and industry verification forms. As part of your assessment, you will be responsible for sending in your industry verification forms, however, your supervisor verification forms will be emailed to the School of Veterinary Nursing.

We recommend you consider taking in morning tea (a packet of nice biscuits or some home baking) as a thank you occasionally during your work placement in recognition of the support the veterinary clinic are providing you. This will show the veterinary clinic that you appreciated their support.

We will phone and email your veterinary clinic when you are about to start work placement and will touch-base regularly throughout your placement. We will receive feedback and evaluation on your skills list and professionalism and we also ask our supervising veterinary clinics to touch-base with us at any time if they have any concerns or require clarification on a particular area of your study.

Things that are helpful to know, remember...

- 1) Confidentiality must be maintained at all times.
- 2) To never make disparaging remarks about any veterinary clinic, their staff or their clients.
- 3) To treat your work placement as you would a job that you *must* keep. Many students find employment from their time as a work experience student, and staff from different veterinary clinics will talk to each other, so you must put your best foot forward at all times if you hope to succeed in this industry.
- 4) Booking a regular meeting time, at least fortnightly, with your supervisor. Preferably, not on your work placement day if this suits them better.
- 5) To always show respect for all staff and clients.

When it comes to having to complete video evidence as part of an assessment:

- a) This should NOT be the first time you have done this.
Your video clip will be used to collect evidence of your performance doing specific tasks and therefore you need to display confidence and competency when completing these tasks.
- b) All assessment tasks must be undertaken independently, this means no instruction from others.
- c) Collection of assessment/video evidence must not disrupt the normal running of the veterinary clinic. This is why it is essential that your supervisor knows of your assessment requirements as soon as possible so this can be planned into the veterinary clinic daily schedule (if possible).
- d) Be aware some veterinary clinics will perform certain tasks slightly different to what we have taught you. Undertake the tasks as required by the veterinary clinic, but when you submit your video evidence make sure that you explain in a written paragraph as to how this task differ, why it is suitable/not suitable/how it compares to the taught procedure. This will ensure the assessor has a full understanding of the assessment evidence submitted.
- e) It is important to note that none of the video evidence clips require anyone to hold the camera. They can all be done by placing the camera in a position to capture the area where you are working (either on a shelf, pile of books or a tripod – make one out of a plastic bottle <http://lifelifehacker.com/222576/diy-water-bottle-tripod>). It is all about capturing evidence as you work through specific tasks during the day (business as normal).
- f) Veterinary clinics are very busy places and a lot of the tasks we undertake must be completed quickly and it is often hard to “stop” in the middle of a procedure just for you to collect video evidence. PLANNING IS THE KEY! At the end of the day you can take your video clips home and review them. Once you have reviewed and reflected on your performance you can either write comments critiquing if it’s just minor problems, or re-capture more video the footage another day until you are happy with your performance.
- g) Look ahead right at the beginning of the year at what is coming up throughout the year. There is a summary in your logbook. It may be that you have become skilled earlier in the year at one task, so can capture it early, but another task that is due early; you are not quite ready for, so decide to request an extension.

Sick days - ALWAYS telephone your work placement and let them know if you are not able to attend. They will appreciate the courtesy call and not sharing of bugs!

Remember, you are treating this work placement like a real work place.

Enjoy your work placement ☺

If you would like to ask us any questions, please do not hesitate to call the Otago Polytechnic School of Veterinary Nursing on **0800 762 786** and ask to speak with a Learning Advisor.

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