Otago Polytechnic

School of Animal Health

NZ 4389 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing (Level 6) Year One

On Campus Programme Information

Programme Content

Year 1 of the programme is made up of eight 15-credit courses.

- Veterinary Nursing Practice
- Animal Husbandry & Behaviour
- Anatomy & Physiology
- Companion Animal Practicum I
- Introduction to Surgery & Diagnostics
- Introduction to Anaesthesia and Analgesia
- Introduction to Medical Nursing
- Companion Animal Practicum II

The theory courses are criterion-referenced, which means you will be graded A+, A, A-, B+ and so forth. You must obtain a minimum grade of 50% (C-) for each learning outcome to pass.

The practicum courses are competency based, so grades can be either pass or fail.

The first four courses must be passed before completing Practicum II, and the Anatomy and Physiology course must be passed before completing the three 'Introduction to…' courses. All year one courses must be completed and passed to enter year two of the programme.

Each of the two practical courses (Practicum I and Practicum II) are assessed using a range of evidence, including demonstration of skills such as animal handling and restraint, laboratory, anaesthesia and medical nursing skills, evidence of work placement attendance and engagement, professionalism, feedback from your supervisors in placement and written reflections on your learning.

Key Work Placement Information

Planning work placement in your first year**:**

- You will require a minimum of 205 vet clinic placement hours and a minimum of 45 animal facility hours in the first year. Please see details in table below of how these hours can be assembled for each practicum.
- Due to lack of availability of vet clinic placements in Dunedin, you must have your vet clinic placement secured outside of Dunedin and Mosgiel (north of Waikouaiti and south of Milton) by 31st January.
- You may complete the required hours in more than one clinic or animal facility.

If you have not secured a clinic placement by the start date you must let us know. We don't want you to be in a position where you have enrolled and paid for the programme and cannot complete it.

Veterinary clinic placements in the wider Dunedin area are severely limited so if you enroll you must be committed to travel outside of Dunedin (including Balclutha and Mosgiel) to complete the required placement. You must not approach Dunedin clinics yourself. Our work placement coordinator manages all placements for the Dunedin clinics.

If you cannot go outside of Dunedin for work placement due to family commitments or other reasons, you may apply for one of the two Dunedin-based placements. Please fill out the form here. Note that selection is based on needs and can only be guaranteed for the first year. Applications for this close on 31st October.

It's important to note that veterinary clinics start early and can finish late. If you have children or other commitments, you'll need to organize yourself as you will be expected to do full days when you are on work placement.

Before commencing any work placement, you must complete a Passport to Safety module which covers basic health & safety, hazards in the animal/veterinary facility and expectations of professional behaviour in the placement. Work placement hours will not be counted until this is completed. You will be introduced to this module in the first week of the programme or before.

Practicum 1 (this course runs from March – July 2027)

Total required: 125 hours
These hours can be made up of:

Animal-related facility (eg: SPCA, grooming parlours, cat and dog Rescues, boarding kennels, catteries and other non-veterinary animal facilities): • you must complete a minimum of 45 hours • only a maximum 105 hours can be counted
Veterinary clinic: • you must complete a minimum of 20 hours • only a maximum 125 hours can be counted
On-campus practical/simulation classes: • up to 20 hours may count toward practicum requirements

Key requirement: Complete at least 45 animal-facility hours, at least 20 veterinary clinic hours, and a total of 125 practicum hours.

Practicum 2 (this course runs from July – October 2027)

Total required: 125 hours
These hours can be made up of:

Veterinary clinic: • you must compete a minimum of 100 hours
Animal-related facility: • no minimum requirement • only a maximum of 10 hours can be counted
On-campus practical/simulation classes: • up to 25 hours may count toward practicum requirements

Key requirement: Practicum 2 is primarily veterinary-clinic based. Complete at least 100 veterinary clinic hours and a total of 125 practicum hours.

Suitable Animal Related Facilities

The focus of this qualification is small animals, i.e. cats, dogs, rabbits, guinea pigs, birds, rats and mice. Suitable animal facilities may include the SPCA, boarding kennels and catteries, small animal petting zoos, doggy day care. It must be set up as a commercial facility, not a home-based enterprise. If you are unsure whether the facility meets the criteria, please check with your tutor first. Equine or rural facilities are not suitable.

All veterinary clinic placements must be focused on companion animals as above. You may complete your work placement in a clinic which deals with both rural and companion animals if you are working with the companion animals. Rural and equine clinics are not suitable.

Optional placement opportunities for on-campus students

Cat Rescue Desexing Clinic

Sara Best (your year 1 learning advisor and main tutor) hosts two students each Thursday at the Cat Rescue Desexing Clinic. These are classed as veterinary clinic hours.

• One shift per semester (may be more if not everyone in the class wants a shift)
• Approximately 5 hours per shift
• This will equate to approximately 5 veterinary clinic hours per practicum
• Participation is optional, an email will be sent out in late January 2027 for anyone wishing to be added to the roster.
• Roster finalized and communicated with learners: Early February 2027

Animal-Related Facility Placements

There is currently no shortage of animal-related facility placements in Dunedin, so learners are not required to travel outside Dunedin to complete these if they don't wish to.

• Up to 20 placement hours may be available through our workplace co-ordinator Katie Prasad and she will organise these with interested learners early in 2027 once the programme has started. Katie will put out a form once you have started the programme for those interested in getting placed in facilities.
• Learners organize their own placements for the remaining hours (25hrs).
• Contact: Katie.prasad@op.ac.nz

Full time study

The full-time programme takes two years to complete. You must have the capacity to study for 35-40 hours each week for study and work placement.

- If you are unsure if you will be able to sustain this, you should enroll part-time (distance).
- If you need to work more than 10-15 hours per week, you should study part-time.

If you have young children, sports commitments, or own a farm you should study part time. We see many students who apply for full-time study with us and then withdraw or transfer to part time due to the pressures of study and work/home life.

If you find that you cannot keep up with study please contact us early to discuss options to support you.

-

Skills to be successful

We take pride in our support of students who are studying on campus. Your tutors will guide you through your learning with weekly updates on where you should be up to, schedules for study and assessment due dates, and online classes.

We have an excellent Student Success team who can assist with learning, wellbeing, IT, Māori, Pasifika, disability and queer support.

However, we can only do so much. Skills you need are commitment, good time management and the ability to stick to a regular study schedule including enough hours to properly cover the learning resources and assessments. Lastly, you need lots of self-motivation. Working at home on a laptop means it's easy to become distracted by social media and idle web-surfing, so you also need to be disciplined to avoid distraction.

The veterinary industry is rewarding but can be physically and emotionally demanding at times. You need to be physically and mentally well yourself to ensure you can deal with the ups and downs of the clinic environment. If you wish to discuss this prior to enrollment, please get in touch.

Programme Expectations

Full-time students are expected to attend face-to-face classes on Mondays and Tuesdays according to the timetable. The exception to this is the first week of the programme, starting 22 February, where you are expected to attend classes face-to-face for the full week (Mon-Fri)

There will be a handful of classes scheduled on Wednesdays throughout the year which will be timetabled from the beginning of the year so you can plan for these.

You are expected to study independently during off-campus days and keep up with your study timetable but can set your own study routine to suit you at these days. Your tutors monitor your weekly attendance. Failure to attend may result in exclusion from the programme.

If you are struggling to keep up, please let us know. If you have work or personal problems which are preventing you from studying effectively, we may refer you to Student Success. The main thing we ask is that you communicate with us and let us know as early as possible so that we can help. If you stop engaging with the course and we don't hear back from you after several attempts at contacting you, we will withdraw you.

All assessments have due dates which are available at the start of the year. If you cannot meet an assessment due date for a valid reason such as illness or bereavement, let us know and we can provide an extension. We may require evidence such as a medical certificate.

If an assessment is not submitted by the due date, and you do not have an extension, the assessment will not be marked. This may result in you failing a course.

If you fail an assessment, we will contact you to discuss the reasons and refer you for support from Student Success.