



Otago Polytechnic

Te Kura Oraka Kararehe | School of Animal Health

NZ Certificate in Animal Healthcare Assisting

(level 4) **Rural Animal** strand

Frequently Asked Questions

Kia ora and thank you for your interest in studying **Rural Animal Healthcare Assisting** with Otago Polytechnic.

This document contains the most commonly asked questions about our Rural Animal Healthcare Assisting programme.

We look forward to your application to enrol and will be happy to answer any further questions you have about the programme.

Mā te wā, bye for now

Steph

Steph Mann

Principal Lecturer and Programme Leader for NZCert. AHCA Rural strand

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1. I don't have academic entry requirement. Can I still enrol?

We will consider your application to study with us even if you don't meet our academic entry requirements, particularly if you are 25 years or older. We may require that your Numeracy and Literacy is assessed using the national online tool. You need to reach Step 4 or greater to be considered for enrolment into this programme. Alternately we may defer your study and transfer you to our level 3 Animal Care programme first. Please apply and we'll be in touch.

2. What does the programme consist of? What courses are in it?

The Animal Healthcare Assisting programme, rural animal strand is made up of 8, 15-credit courses, 6 of which are theory based:

- ANML4301 Rural animal (RA) professionalism and infection control
- ANML4302 RA anatomy and physiology
- ANML4303 RA Husbandry and Behaviour
- ANML4304 Practicum one
- ANML4305 RA Health and Hygiene
- ANML4306 RA Clinical Assistance
- ANML4307 RA Prep for practice, and
- ANML4308 Practicum two

The theory courses are "Criterion-based", which means you will be graded A+, A, A-, B+ and so forth. Theory assessments have a minimum pass requirement of C- (50%). Most of the theory courses in this programme have two assessments which contribute to the overall course grade. The practicum courses are competency based, you either pass or not.

3. What does full-time study look like compared to part time?

The full-time programme is taken over one year. It often appears as an attractive alternative to studying part-time over two years. However, the full-time option is not for the faint-hearted! There is an expectation of 40 hours per week dedicated to study and collecting your practical experiences.

If you are unsure if you will be able to sustain this, you should enrol into the part-time group.

If you are working, you need to be studying part-time.

If you have children, sports commitments (especially horses), own a farm you should be studying part time.

We see **many** ākonga | students who apply for full-time study with us and need to transfer to part time throughout the year. Often, they are people who think they will be able to study in the evenings and weekends. In reality, we all need down time! Furthermore, clinics will not generally have ākonga | students on placement in the weekends and rural clinics will not have the type of experience you will need during weekend placement. It is also important to understand that farmers and veterinary clinics are early starters, which means you'll be starting placement early too.

If you are considering your study options, you need to be realistic and honest with yourself.

4. What happens if I start full time, but can't keep up?

Depending on how far through the programme you are, we have a range of options to support you. For example, we can withdraw you from some courses and spread your study out over a longer period or transfer you from full-time to part-time. The further through the year we are, the fewer our options are for doing this though, and after a certain point you will be ineligible for fee refunds.

5. How is the practical component assessed?

There are 12 skills in them that you need to demonstrate your competency in (ranging from basic animal handling and restraint, through to laboratory skills, and assisting the veterinarian in more complex skills), and a **minimum** requirement of 240 placement hours that you need to collect.

The minimum requirement of 240 placement hours for this programme consists of at least 160 hours on farms (placement on a dairy cattle farm and a sheep farm are compulsory, other species optional) and at least 80 hours with the rural veterinary clinic.

You can collect some hours in other settings, such as in a veterinary pathology laboratory or with an AI technician but you need to get prior approval from us first.

Your logged hours and feedback from your veterinary clinic placement are assessed throughout the year as well.

The logged hours are usually collected organically – that is to say, by the time you have practiced and collected your assessed practical skills, you will generally have met the minimum requirements for logging hours. Ākonga | students are often concerned with logging hours, but the focus is on skills completion.

Both Practicum courses are “Competency-based” which means you will be graded either passed or not passed.

6. When do I need to have my clinic placement organised by? When do I tell them I will be starting?

We strongly recommend your clinic placement must be organised before the programme commences in July.

Practicum One commences shortly after the block courses have been run, early **August**. The reason for this is to ensure we have been able to give you a safe grounding before you start. This is an industry-driven directive.

Your placement details will need to be logged online using InPlace. You will receive instructions on how to access / use InPlace once you are enrolled.

7. When do I need to have my farm placements organised by? When do I tell them I will be starting?

As farm placements are usually much easier to organise (because there are more farms than veterinary clinic placement opportunities), we do not need you to have your placement organised before the programme commences.

Placement can start any time after the first block course.

Importantly, some of the assessed skills in the placements are seasonal. We discuss the practicum requirements, including seasonality of skills at your block course but it is good to know in advance!

8. Can I be cross credited for previous experience or other qualifications?

We look at this on a case-by-case basis.

The most common scenario are occasions where assessment reduction can be applied with appropriate evidence from you. Ākonga | students may come with extensive farming background. We would look at alternate forms of evidence for some of the skills in the workbook. For example:

- Ākonga | students who have studied the VNA strand or hold a NZ Diploma in Veterinary Nursing will have already met some requirements.
- Ākonga | students with agricultural qualifications or unit standards may also have enough evidence for us to grant reduction on parts of some assessments.
- Some accredited courses, e.g., DairyNZ Body Condition Scoring or NZVA Intramammary EduBadge can be used as alternate evidence for assessed skills in the Practicums.

We can work through this with you once you are fully enrolled and the programme has commenced.

9. What block course/s do I have to attend? Where are the block courses?

There are **two compulsory block courses** that all ākonga | students need to attend. Both are 2-days long. We run the compulsory block courses in the South Island, based at Otago Polytechnic in Dunedin.

10. Are there any compulsory textbooks or other items I need?

There are no compulsory textbooks, but we have a passion for them, so can recommend reading throughout the programme on almost every topic! We have a great library, which ships loaned books out for free to our off-campus ākonga | students. Many titles are available as e-books. Your membership to the Robertson Library is automatic as a ākonga | student.

You will need to purchase Otago Polytechnic branded uniform items from Arrow Uniforms:

- A name badge
- At least one Otago Polytechnic polo top (shown)
- Otago Polytechnic branded overalls*

As well as the branded items, you will need:

- Appropriate gumboots for dairy shed work. These need to be waterproof and have good tread on the soles.
- Waterproof, chemical resistant (dairy) bib overalls e.g., Kaiwaka, Betacraft or Techniflex
- A sun hat
- A warm hat

Optionally you can purchase work-boots for sheep (gumboots can be worn for sheep). These should have waterproof agent applied to them so they can be disinfected between farms and have good tread on the soles. You might also get yourself a waterproof, chemical resistant jacket.

* If you have your own overalls or are supplied overalls as part of your employment, you do not need to purchase OP branded. However, overalls must be in good condition! You will need to purchase an Otago Polytechnic patch from Arrow Uniforms and stitch this onto your overalls if you are supplying your own.

ALL items must be **scrubbed clean** and in good order for block course and placements.

11. What technical equipment will I need and how will I access online resources?

You will need a constant, reliable internet source, laptop / computer or tablet and access to a mobile phone with internet access and camera to access and successfully complete your studies as a ākongā | student studying off campus.

We use the internet-based Moodle for your programme delivery and to upload assessments. You will have online access to the Robertson Library and a variety of tools.

We also use online apps, such as Microsoft Teams, and InPlace to connect with you, record your work placement details and log your placement hours. Our “face-to-face” lectures are delivered online. You are expected to attend lectures on a regular basis as part of your commitment to study.

12. I'm not sure if I will be able to learn via distance. What support is there for me as an extra-mural / distance ākonga | student?

We describe our programme delivery as highly blended. What does this mean? It means that we guide you through the programme with regular personal interactions.

We take a lot of pride in our pastoral care of ākonga | students who are studying off campus. It is very important to us you recognise early on that learning by distance is not the same as learning in isolation.

Your lecturers will be guiding you through your learning with weekly updates on where you should be up to, reminders for assessment submission due dates, online lectures and informal learning and group cohesion using Microsoft Teams. There are forums for asking assessment related questions that we encourage you to use. We are also only ever an email or call away – just like raising your hand in the classroom setting, but digitally instead. Otago Polytechnic also has a very strong Ākonga | student Success team who can assist with many forms of learning disabilities.

13. What are my employment prospects like after completing this programme?

If you're a hard-working, successful ākonga | student, your prospects are good! However, the rural veterinary industry does vary in its uses of technicians from clinic to clinic, town to town across New Zealand. Often ākonga | students are offered either seasonal or permanent employment while studying. We recommend that you talk to the clinics in your area to gauge an honest response to this question.

14. Where to now?

You can apply to study with us online: <https://www.op.ac.nz/programmes/nzqa/new-zealand-certificate-in-animal-healthcare-assisting-level-4-companion-animal-healthcare-or-rural-animal-healthcare/>

If you have any further questions, please email them to animalhealth@op.ac.nz

We look forward to your application!

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