

**VETERINARY
SCHOOL
PLANNING GUIDE**

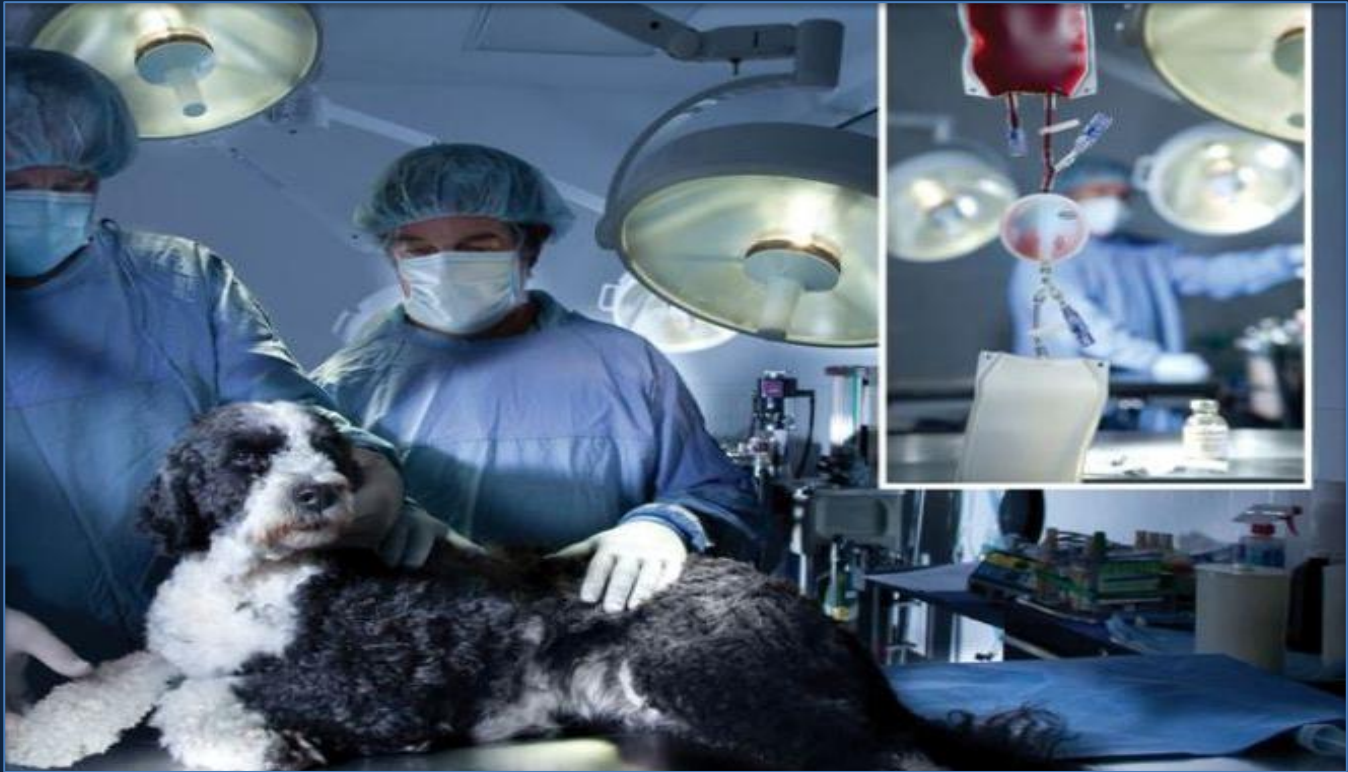


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INTRODUCTION

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), “Doctors of veterinary medicine are medical professionals whose primary responsibility is protecting the health and welfare of animals and people.”

The purpose of this booklet is to describe the procedure for applying to and preparing for veterinary medical school. The most important challenge in this process is deciding that veterinary medicine is the career for you and assessing the implications of that decision. It is our hope that you have consulted your pre-health advisor at several points during your undergraduate career at Hopkins in order to help you clarify your motivation to become a veterinarian (D.V.M.). In making the decision to apply to veterinary medical school, it is important to evaluate other opportunities that are available to you during this time frame.

If you proceed with your application, the initiative is and must be yours. It is essential that you complete the tasks outlined here on time and do a thorough job of putting together the best possible presentation of yourself. We are here to support you throughout the application process and wish you every success in achieving your goals. A majority of the information in this booklet is provided by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMA).

We wish you success in your health career pursuits,

Shannon Jensen, MA
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WHAT DOES A DOCTOR OF VETERINARY MEDICINE (D.V.M.) DO?

- Diagnose and control animal diseases
- Treat sick and injured animals
- Prevent the transmission of animal diseases to people
- Advise owners on proper care of pets and livestock
- Ensure a safe food supply by maintaining the health of food animals
- Are involved in wildlife preservation and conservation and public health of the human population



CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the many geographic choices available to the veterinary physician (D.V.M.'s are licensed in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico), there are a variety of settings or types of practices from which to choose:

- **PRIVATE PRACTICE.** Approximately 75% of all veterinarians are in private clinical practice. Of those, about 58% are engaged in exclusively small animal practice in which they treat only companion animals. About 18% limit their practice to the care of farm animals or horses. Another 19% are involved in what is known as mixed (or general) animal practice. Their patients include all types of pets, horses and livestock. Veterinarians in private clinical practice work to prevent disease and other health problems in their patients.
- **TEACHING AND RESEARCH.** More than 3800 veterinarians teach at colleges and universities. Also, many veterinary faculty members conduct basic and clinical research, provide various services to the public, contribute to scientific publications and develop continuing education programs to help graduate veterinarians acquire new knowledge and skills.
- **REGULATORY MEDICINE.** The two main responsibilities of veterinarians in this area are the control or elimination of certain diseases, and protection of the public from animal diseases that can affect people.
- **PUBLIC HEALTH.** Help to prevent and control animal and human diseases and to promote good health. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) employs veterinarians to determine the safety and the efficacy of medicines and food additives.
- **UNIFORMED SERVICES.** In the U.S. Army Veterinary Corps, veterinarians are responsible for biomedical research and development. In the U.S. Air Force Biomedical Science Corps, veterinarians manage communicable disease control programs at U.S. Air Force bases around the world to halt the spread of HIV, encephalitis, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases.
- **PRIVATE INDUSTRY.** Veterinarians working in pharmaceutical and biomedical firms develop, test and supervise the production of drugs, chemicals and biological products, such as antibiotics and vaccines for human and animal use.

PERSONAL ABILITIES

- An inquiring mind and keen powers of observation
- Aptitude and interest in the biological sciences
- Lifelong interest in scientific learning
- Like & understanding of animals
- Ability to meet, talk and work well with a variety of people
- Ability to deal with difficult situations, such as an owners grief and loss when an animal passes away or is put to sleep

PRE-HEALTH PROFESSIONS CHECKLIST

Those considering applying to a veterinary often ask what they need to do to get accepted or what the schools are seeking in candidates. What the schools seek in applicants are:



1. STRONG ACADEMIC RECORD

- Demonstrated mastery of the basic science requirements.
- Demonstrated a broad and successful exposure to the humanities and social sciences.
- Maintained or further developed an ability to read rapidly and understand sophisticated material in the humanities and social sciences (especially important for those taking a test like the GRE or MCAT).
- Demonstrated a commitment to lifelong learning.
- Established a relationship with at least four faculty members and with a professional in the field who can write a letter of recommendation.

2. FIRM AND CLEAR MOTIVATION

- Demonstrated that you care deeply about animals, fellow human beings and their welfare.
- Demonstrated that you know what you are getting into, i.e., you understand the role of a D.V.M. from direct personal contact.

3. OUTSTANDING PERSONAL QUALITIES

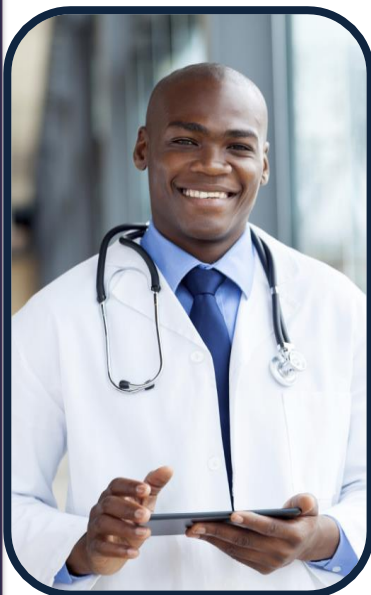
- Demonstrated personal traits such as maturity, stability, integrity, responsibility, trustworthiness, leadership, enthusiasm, etc.
- Demonstrated that you have accomplished something worthwhile, and have skills and abilities which will allow you to contribute to the life of your veterinary medical school and your intended profession.
- Demonstrated ability to communicate with varied populations.
- Demonstrated ability to deal effectively with those of other cultural backgrounds.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION

To enter a college of veterinary medicine, one must first complete three to four years of college credit at an accredited institution. The majority of students who enter a college of veterinary medicine have a bachelor's degree and some have completed graduate study.

There is no particular major required for veterinary medical school, just the prerequisite of certain science classes. You should check the specific admissions requirements for your schools of interest; however, some typical prerequisite courses include:

- Biology or zoology with lab (6-9 credits)
- Inorganic chemistry with lab (6-8 credits)
- Organic chemistry with lab (4-8 credits)
- Biochemistry with lab (3-4 credits)
- Physics with lab (6-8 credits)
- Microbiology with lab (3-5 credits)
- English (6 credits)
- Mathematics; some programs also require statistics (3-6 credits)
- Humanities and social science classes (3-6 credits)



CHOOSING A SCHOOL

Choosing which physician assistant schools you apply to is a personal decision, so relying on any rankings you find may be misleading. Instead, below are questions you should consider as you review each school's material to make your choices:

- ❖ What is the focus of the PA training? Does it match my interests and needs?
- ❖ What is the structure of the curriculum in terms of what is taught and when?
- ❖ What academic resources are available?
- ❖ What services are available to the students?
- ❖ Where is the school located? Most state-supported physician assistant schools give significant preference to state residents.

APPLICATION PROCESS



FOUR MAJOR STEPS OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS:

1. Taking the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) - however, some colleges will accept the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT). Please note that in addition to the GRE, some schools require the biology subject test.
2. Completing the Veterinary Medical College Application Service (VMCAS) form for the U.S. schools that participate in VMCAS or individual school applications for non-participating institutions.
3. Submitting supplemental materials such as letters of evaluation and academic transcripts.
4. Managing the timing of the application process.

SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING APPLICATION MATERIALS DIRECTLY TO VMCAS

- VMCAS Web application (submitted electronically)
- Application fee
- Three completed letters of recommendation using VMCAS electronic forms.

Send the following materials directly to the veterinary medical colleges. You must check each school directly for specific instructions:

- Supplemental application, if required, and any associated fees
- College transcripts
- Standardized test scores

VETERINARY MEDICAL COLLEGE APPLICATION SERVICE (VMCAS)

The VMCAS is a centralized application service sponsored by the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC). The VMCAS reviews the applicant's application form for completion; processes payment of application fees which vary depending on the number of schools to which you apply; and then electronically transmits applicant's data to the colleges selected by the applicant.

Applicants need to complete only one application form which is then sent in standardized form to the veterinary medical schools you list on your application. It is important to note that not all veterinary medical colleges participate in VMCAS and require that their application be sent directly to the school. Be sure to check the AAVMC website for a list of schools and their application requirements: <http://www.aavmc.org/Member-Institutions.aspx>

For more information, contact:

VMCAS
1101 Vermont Ave., NW Level 1C
Washington, DC 20005
(877) 862-2740

<http://www.aavmc.org/Students-Applicants-and-Advisors/Veterinary-Medical-College-Application-Service.aspx>

GRADUATE RECORD EXAMINATION (GRE)

Colleges of veterinary medicine accept the GRE (however, some institutions will accept the MCAT). The examination is administered in a computer-based format and takes just over half a day to administer. It consists of three separate sections that cover the following:

- **Analytical Writing:** Tests your critical thinking and analytical writing skills. It assesses your ability to articulate and support complex ideas, analyze an argument, and sustain a focused and coherent discussion. It does not assess specific content knowledge.
- **Verbal Reasoning:** Measures your ability to analyze and evaluate written material and synthesize information obtained from it, to analyze relationships among component parts of sentences, to recognize relationships between words and concepts, and to reason with words in solving problems. There is a balance of passages across different subject matter area: humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.
- **Quantitative Reasoning:** Measures your basic mathematical skills, your understanding of elementary mathematical concepts, and your ability to reason quantitatively and solve problems in a quantitative setting. There is a balance of questions requiring arithmetic, algebra, geometry and data analysis.

For more information (including fees and testing sites) and to register visit the GRE web site, www.gre.org.

VMCAS APPLICATION CHECKLIST

APPLYING TO
VETERINARY
MEDICINE
SCHOOL

VMCAS Web Application

- Create a web application account early at www.aavmc.org.
- Applicants must read all instructions for each section.
- Record your user name and password in a secure and easy-to-remember location.
- Please review your application carefully to make sure that the data is accurate.
- Print your completed application for your records before sending it electronically to VMCAS. Do not send printed applications to VMCAS.
- You must send the application to VMCAS before 12:00 midnight Eastern time the day of the deadline. No late documents are accepted.

Evaluations

- Be sure to register a minimum of three evaluators in the eLOR section.
- Be sure to verify that your evaluators have received the email request and have submitted your evaluation by 1:00 pm Eastern Time the day of the deadline.
- VMCAS requires all electronic evaluations. The only exceptions are multi-page committee letters and composite letters (however some schools will not accept committee/composite letters).
- Check the eLOR section to verify that your evaluations have been received by VMCAS

Other Application Materials

- Send transcripts and test scores directly to the designated colleges prior to the deadline.
- Visit the Web site for each designated college to obtain college-specific instructions.
- Complete any supplemental applications.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPLICATION MATERIALS

While VMCAS has application requirements, there may be other requirements for admission, including additional application forms, personal statements, and a personal interview. Be sure to check with the individual schools to determine what supplemental materials are required.

MANAGING THE TIMING OF THE APPLICATION

DON'T PROCRASTINATE! Application deadlines vary and every school has its own program start date. Please be sure to research the application deadlines and program start dates ahead of time. Applicants are advised to apply early as it can take up to four weeks for your application to be processed.

It is important to seek veterinary related experiences either during the school year as well as in the summer months. Work or volunteer in places such as a veterinary clinic, farm, zoo, wildlife park, aquarium or ranch. Keep a record of the time you spend in each veterinary-related experience and the type of knowledge you gained from it. Veterinary colleges are not usually interested in a daily account of your experiences, but a log will help you summarize the benefits of your experiences and accurately account for the length of time. Working with a veterinarian will also help you decide if veterinary medicine is the career for you.

HEALTHCARE RELATED EXPERIENCE

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION



Types of recommendation letters vary by veterinary medical school. If you are applying through VMCAS, they require that at least three letters be submitted to eLOR only. Most schools prefer the three letters to be from:

- Academic advisor or faculty member
- Veterinarian
- Professor
- Other professional

Keep in mind that an important part of your application consists of letters of recommendation written by people who know you personally. It is your job to solicit the strongest possible letters of recommendation/evaluation.

Select your recommenders to reflect a variety of your strengths. A strongly supportive letter from someone in your major field of study can be very important. If you are taking a tutorial, or have done independent research, ask your supervisor to write a letter for you. Be thoughtful about what each person can contribute.

Whenever possible, ask for your letter in person. Request a brief interview and use the opportunity to discuss your application. We advise you to prepare a statement of why you wish to attend physician assistant school to help the writer.

Be respectful of demands on your recommender. Allow approximately a month for your letter to be written. Follow-up with a written thank-you note, and later advise them of your admissions decision. Your recommenders are interested in you.



THE VETERINARY MEDICAL SCHOOL INTERVIEW

Most veterinary medical schools require an interview. The interview serves two purposes: 1) the veterinary medical school is recruiting you, and 2) the admissions committee is evaluating you as a prospective veterinary medical student. Make the most of this opportunity to present yourself in the best possible light. It is your chance to explain yourself, to demonstrate your poise and maturity, and to show that you are an interesting and attractive candidate.



You should look forward to your interviews at veterinary medical schools as an opportunity for the admissions committee to come to know you and to understand your commitments and goals. Before the day of your interview, review both your VMCAS and the secondary application for that school. You should review the material the school has sent you, look closely at their website, and be prepared to discuss why you are specifically interested in their program.

Each veterinary medical school will approach the interview process in different ways, but they will all generally be working to understand your strengths and weaknesses in the following areas:

PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS. Throughout your interview you will be asked questions which can help the committee understand the way in which you approach decision-making. They will be working to insure that you are careful in problem-solving, that you are attentive to detail, that you are able to be flexible, that you are tolerant of cultural differences, and that you can accept the right of someone to have an opinion that differs from your own. The questions asked in order to give you an opportunity to demonstrate your abilities will generally be quite innocent, such as "Tell me about your family." Or, "Why did you choose to attend the Johns Hopkins University?" When asked a question around a complex issue, do not simply answer "yes" or "no" but give the interviewer insight into how you have arrived at that decision.

COMMITMENT TO VETERINARY MEDICINE. . You must convince the interviewer that you have made a mature, well-informed decision to pursue your chosen career. You must demonstrate an understanding of the demands and realities of a life in that profession and of your emotional, intellectual and physical ability to meet these challenges. You may also be asked to talk in greater detail about your veterinary related experience.

CONTINUED...

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS. You must demonstrate throughout the interview day the interpersonal skills needed to be successful in the practice. Strong communication skills, awareness of the needs of others, and the compassion to respond to those needs must be evidenced.

ACADEMIC READINESS. The admissions committee will need to be assured that you will be successful in the school's curriculum. If there are questions which rise from your academic record, be prepared to answer them openly and honestly. You may also be asked how you handle stress as veterinary medicine programs can be rigorous and stressful.

Be prepared with a question about the school, the curriculum or the faculty if asked. Demonstrate some knowledge of the specific school. Be genuine and show interest in the answer. Consider what you want the admissions committee to know about you. What makes you special (i.e. volunteerism, research, leadership, personal characteristics, goals, etc.)? Find a way to gracefully segue these topics into the conversation.

The decision to grant you an interview commits the resources of the professional school admissions process to you for the interview day and, of necessity, eliminates another candidate from the interview process. If you are offered an interview, take the first available appointment and make plans to keep this appointment. Canceling an interview or not showing up causes great problems for a professional school and can damage your reputation.

Be respectful of everyone you meet during the interview day. Interactions with veterinary student guides and support staff may influence committee decisions.

Write a note to each interviewer within a week of the interview to thank them for their time and mention new information that you received from them.

REMEMBER TO:

- Dress professionally
- Make eye contact with the interviewer
- No gum or lozenges
- Listen actively!!!

FINANCING VETERINARY MEDICAL SCHOOL

Everyone knows that the cost of veterinary school is expensive and getting more expensive. In general, veterinary schools do not consider ability to pay when selecting applicants. They expect each student will manage with the help of parents, spouse, and other family members to pay for the tuition and costs. Fortunately, however, additional help is available from a variety of other sources, including federal and state government loans, institutional loans and scholarships, and private foundations.

As you complete the application process, your main source of information will be the financial aid offices of the veterinary schools themselves. They will help you put together a financial aid package based on your estimated costs and ability to pay. The financial aid is usually an important consideration in finalizing your choice of a veterinary school.

VETERINARY MEDICINE RESOURCES

A number of organizations can offer information about careers in veterinary medicine, preparing for admission and financial aid for veterinary medical students.

American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)
www.avma.org

List of Veterinary Medical Schools in US and abroad
<http://www.aavmc.org/Member-Institutions.aspx>

Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC)
www.aavmc.org

Complementary and Alternative Veterinary Medicine
www.altvetmed.org

U.S. Food & Drug Administration Center for Veterinary Medicine
www.fda.gov/cvm

Health Resources and Services Administration
www.hrsa.gov

Johns Hopkins Career Center
<http://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/careers/>

Johns Hopkins University Office of Undergraduate Advising - National
Scholarships Advising
<http://fellowships.jhu.edu/>

Free Application for Federal Student Aid
www.fafsa.ed.gov

Stafford Loan
www.staffordloan.com

Graduate Record Examination (GRE)
www.gre.org

