



Supervisor

# **Companion Volume User Guide: Veterinary Nursing**

## **ACM Animal Care and Management Training Package**

Version 1.0

December 2018

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## Overview

### About this Guide

This is the **Companion Volume User Guide: Veterinary Nursing**, which supports the delivery and assessment of the two veterinary nursing qualifications in the Animal Care and Management Training Package, Release 2.0. It includes information about:

- interpreting the units of competency in the revised templates
- information about work placements.

This **User Guide** is an optional companion volume developed by Skills Impact to support good practice implementation of the veterinary nursing qualifications and units. It is not endorsed in the same way as units of competency and qualifications, and as such, it can be updated at any time. In time, it will provide an opportunity to showcase best practice from RTOs and provide a forum for sharing information and resources. If you have any ideas, resources, case studies or feedback to contribute to this guide, please provide your feedback via the Skills Impact Continuous Improvement Feedback Register.

This **User Guide** should be read in conjunction with the **Companion Volume Implementation Guide** for the ACM Animal Care and Management Training Package, Volume 2.0. The Implementation Guide is a mandatory requirement for Skills Service Organisations to develop. It is available at [vetnet.education.gov.au/Pages/TrainingPackages.aspx](http://vetnet.education.gov.au/Pages/TrainingPackages.aspx) and includes overview information about the entire Training Package, including a list of all units of competency, skills sets and qualifications. It also includes key implementation advice for use by RTOs, including:

- unit and qualification coding
- mapping between previous and current versions of the qualifications and units of competency
- key work, training and regulatory/licensing requirements in the industry
- legislation requirements for all animal care sectors, including veterinary nursing
- resources and equipment requirements
- access and equity considerations
- training pathways
- occupational outcomes of qualifications
- entry requirements for qualifications.

## Working with units of competency and assessment requirements

The units of competency in the ACM Animal Care and Management Training Package are presented in the template from the *2012 Standards for Training Packages*. The information is organised into two main parts:

- unit of competency
- assessment requirements.

Below is a veterinary nursing unit of competency with the associated assessment requirements, with the template fields explained.

### Units of competency

<b>ACMVET401</b>	<b>Coordinate veterinary reception duties</b>
<b>Application</b>	<p>This unit of competency describes the skills and knowledge required to coordinate and undertake patient admission and discharge. It also includes providing initial veterinary nursing care to patients (animals) and grief support to clients (animal owners).</p> <p>This unit applies to individuals who work as veterinary nurses under the supervision of a registered veterinarian. Veterinary nurses who coordinate admissions and discharges need to hold and apply knowledge of animal anatomy and physiology and veterinary procedures, to triage patients, and use effective communication skills to support animal owners in grief.</p> <p>Legislative and regulatory requirements apply to veterinary nurses vary according to state/territory jurisdictions. Users must check with relevant regulatory authority before delivery.</p>

Application identifies the work context and to whom the unit applies.

A statement in the application field identifies important licensing/regulatory requirements.

<b>Element</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
Elements describe the essential outcomes.	Performance criteria describe the performance needed to demonstrate achievement of the element.
1. Coordinate practice admissions	1.1 Schedule appointments and other practice procedures 1.2 Advise animal owners on patient intake and pre-treatment procedures for specific periods 1.3 Answer routine and non-routine enquiries 1.4 Send or set reminders for appointments 1.5 Consult veterinarian on relevant details and convey their actions to the client
2. Compile patient and client histories	2.1 Identify patients according to species, breed and permanent identification features 2.2 Retrieve and update existing client and patient histories 2.3 Establish new client and patient records
3. Undertake admission procedure	3.1 Complete admission documentation 3.2 Carry out preliminary examination, handling animal to minimise stress 3.3 Explain procedure to client
4. Provide veterinary nursing care	4.1 Use triage procedures for all admissions 4.2 Recognise and report emergency situations to veterinarian, in line with practice procedures 4.3 Recognise need for isolation 4.4 Use appropriate personal protective equipment for the veterinary nursing care required 4.5 Recognise and report signs of pain 4.6 Apply animal first aid measures to sustain life and to minimise pain as required, under the supervision of a veterinarian 4.7 Provide support to the veterinarian

Element defines the essential outcome of the job task covered in the unit.

Performance criteria specify the performance needed to demonstrate achievement of the element.

Foundation skills highlight the language, literacy and numeracy skills that are **not** explicit in the performance criteria, but are essential to the job task described in the unit.

Foundation Skills	
<i>This section describes those language, literacy, numeracy and employment skills that are essential for performance in this unit of competency but are not explicit in the performance criteria.</i>	
Skill	Description
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record information on paper based records or using computer based technology</li> </ul>
Oral communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use negotiating and questioning techniques to clarify animal care requirements with clients</li> <li>Use veterinary terminology when interacting with practice staff and clients</li> </ul>
Numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure and interpret animal vital signs, including temperature, pulse and respiration rate</li> </ul>
Get the work done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritise animals for consultation with veterinarian</li> <li>Differentiate between enquiries that can be handled by a veterinary nurse and those that need veterinarian intervention</li> <li>Address irregularities and contingencies in the context of the work role</li> </ul>

### Assessment requirements

The assessment requirements included in the updated templates, place an increased focus on assessment and include:

- performance evidence, including information about the frequency and volume of the tasks to be performed for assessment
- knowledge evidence – what candidates need to know to be able to perform the task effectively
- assessment conditions, that specify physical conditions, resources, specifications, and relationships that must be in place for the assessment to take place.

This focus on assessment was also an important part of the redevelopment of the veterinary nursing units, with industry requiring improved consistent outcomes.

TITLE	Assessment requirements for ACMVET401 Coordinate veterinary reception duties
<b>Performance Evidence</b>	
<p>An individual demonstrating competency must satisfy <u>all</u> of the elements and performance criteria of this unit. There must be evidence that the individual has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coordinated and undertaken the admission of a minimum of five patients, covering two species, for routine and non-routine procedures</li> <li>• carried out triage procedures for a minimum of two patients</li> <li>• demonstrated a simulation of applying animal first aid <u>in order to</u> sustain life and minimise pain</li> <li>• coordinated the discharge of a minimum of three patients</li> <li>• communicated appropriately with practice staff and clients in varying situations</li> <li>• performed the activities outlined in the performance criteria of this unit during a period of at least 400 hours of work in a veterinary clinic.</li> </ul>	

Performance evidence describes the practical tasks that must be demonstrated for assessment.

### Knowledge Evidence

An individual must be able to demonstrate the knowledge required to perform the tasks in the elements and performance criteria of this unit. This includes knowledge of:

- emergency situations that may occur with animals, including:
  - dystocia
  - hit by a car or other trauma
  - fractures
  - collapse
  - haemorrhage
  - poisoning
  - respiratory distress
  - heat stroke, snake envenomation
  - tick paralysis
  - hypothermia
  - medical emergencies
- first aid procedures related to sustaining life and minimising pain, including:
  - establishing airway
  - providing oxygen
  - controlling haemorrhage
  - supporting injured or broken limbs
  - supporting the veterinarian and assisting in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) procedures
- practice policies and procedures related to admissions, treatment and discharge of animals
- appropriate handling and restraining techniques to minimise animal stress and discomfort
- drugs within each drug schedule and the regulations applicable in state or territory legislation
- clinical signs of illness, disease and trauma
- triage classification
- need for isolation
- interview, listening and questioning techniques to:
  - gather relevant information to triage and admit patients
  - record patient history (current medication, normal toilet functions, eating routines)
- advice for post-treatment home care including medication needs, wound management, bandaging/casting, immediate housing, prevention of self-trauma, nutrition, pain management exercise and veterinary review
- pain management as part of triage and admission processes
- normal and abnormal vital signs of animals commonly seen in the practice
- the recognised stages of grieving and tactics for managing grief, including:
  - verbal assurance and communication
  - provision of grief hotline details and literature, such as brochures
  - providing advice on burial or cremation decisions

Knowledge evidence is what candidates need to know to be able to perform the job task effectively.

The assessment conditions specify the mandatory conditions for assessment, the conditions under which the evidence must be gathered, and the mandatory assessor requirements. See below for further information.

### Assessment Conditions

Assessment of skills must take place under the following conditions:

- physical conditions:
  - in the workplace or an environment that accurately reflects a veterinary clinic
- resources, equipment and materials:
  - a range of real animals
  - equipment, instruments and resources typically available in a veterinary clinic
- specifications:
  - access to organisational policies and procedures, current legislation, regulations and relevant codes of practice
- relationships (internal and/or external):
  - interactions with real clients
  - interactions with a veterinarian or a Certificate IV qualified veterinary nurse.

Assessors of this unit must satisfy the requirements for assessors in applicable vocational education and training legislation, frameworks and/or standards.

# Assessment of veterinary nursing units of competency

## Assessment methods

Units of competency and assessment requirements do not specify the method of assessment to be used to collect evidence – assessment methods can be determined by the registered training organisation/assessor when designing the assessment strategy. However, industry recommends that the best practice method for assessing the key tasks listed in the performance evidence is through direct observation of skills by the qualified assessor, to ensure that the assessment is valid, reliable and accurately reflects the standards required in the unit. There has been concern that in the past, there has been an over-reliance on assessment of practical skills through third party reports written by personnel who are not qualified assessors, and the result is assessments that are not valid or reliable.

Knowledge evidence can be assessed in several ways, including through oral questioning (with an appropriate sheet to record the evidence provided), or through written assessment, which could be online or paper-based.

## Assessment conditions

Assessment of all VET-coded units of competency requires assessment to be carried out in veterinary practice, or an environment that actually reflects a real workplace, such as a clinical laboratory in an RTO. Many of the units require access to a range of real, live animals. This is to ensure that learners have real interactions through their training.

The workplace environment used for assessment must include resources, equipment and materials that would typically be available in a veterinary practice.

## Supervisory requirements

Supervisory requirements are included in the Application and Assessment Conditions sections for the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing. This is to provide clarity as to the minimum level of supervision required by those responsible for supervising the student during their studies. The levels of supervision are:

- Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing - a registered veterinarian\*\* or minimum of Certificate IV qualified veterinary nurse (\*\***Note:** In Western Australia, supervision is required by a veterinarian for performing the prescribed duties as set out in Regulations 65 and 66 of the *Veterinary Surgeons Regulations 1979*)

The above levels of supervision have been incorporated into their respective qualifications to ensure that the student remains under the supervision of the appropriately qualified individual throughout their studies.

## Resources and equipment required for assessment of Certificate IV units

For Certificate IV units, the resources that may be required for assessment include the following.

### *Administration Equipment:*

- Computer equipped with software typically used in a veterinary practice
- Veterinary Practice Management Software
- Phone
- Copier/printer/fax/scanner
- EFTPOS Machine
- Till
- Petty Cash
- Standard Operating Procedure Manual covering Reception:
  - Invoicing
  - Telephone Etiquette
  - Admission Process

- Discharge Process
- Updating client and animal records
- Invoicing
- Payment Options
- Stray procedure
- Wildlife procedure
- Scheduling
- Triage
- OHS – Vic & WA (WHS all other States)
- Emergency Evacuation Procedure
- Client Complaints
- Accounts
- Till Balancing
- Security
- Clinic Open / Close Procedure
- Infectious Disease / Infection Control
- Contacts / Phone numbers
- Client Confidentiality.

*Policies, Procedures and Legislation:*

- Compliance with relevant legislative requirements (such as Veterinary Surgeons' Acts, animal welfare, infection control, work health and safety, biosecurity)
- Refer to AVA Guidelines where appropriate
- Guidelines for the sale of medicines and animal treatments (prescription and non-prescription)
- Information specific to the practice
- Recording information
- Security, confidentiality and privacy
- Standard Operating Procedure Manuals:
  - Reception
  - Equipment – Maintenance etc.
  - Treatment
  - Surgery
  - Radiology
  - Pathology
  - Pharmacy
  - Isolation
  - Emergency Procedure – Fire / Bomb / Radiation
  - Radiation
  - Infection Control
  - Dental
  - Marketing
  - Social Media
- Employee Manual.

### *Surgical Equipment – Instruments*

- **Eye Kit**
  - Lacrimal Cannula
  - Eye Speculum
  - Castroviejo Needle Holder with Catch
  - Eye Dressing Forceps
  - Half Curved Tissue forceps (4<sup>3/4</sup> to 6", 1-2 teeth)
  - Holzheimer Retractor
  - Strabismus Scissors – 4-5<sup>1/2</sup> "
  - Iris scissors
  - Chalazion Forceps
  - Tonometer / Tonopen (not kept in kit)
- **Dental Kit**
  - Calculus Removal Forceps
  - Hand Scalers
  - Hand Curettes
  - Dental Probe & Explorer
  - Tooth Splitting & Separating Forceps
  - Incisor and Root Extracting Forceps
  - Incisor, Canine & Pre Molar Extracting Forceps
  - Molar Extracting Forceps
  - Dental Elevators
- **Spey Kit (Feline)**
  - Scalpel handle
  - Spey Hook
  - Needle Holder
  - Range of Haemostats both straight and curved
  - Rat Tooth Forceps
  - Dressing Forceps
  - Allis Tissue Forceps
  - Metzenbaum Scissors
  - Mayo Scissors
  - Operating Scissors – Blunt-Blunt, Sharp-Blunt, Sharp-Sharp
  - Backhaus Towel Forceps or Jones Towel Forceps
  - Suture needles\*
- **Spey Kit (Canine)**
  - Scalpel handle
  - Spey Hook
  - Needle Holder
  - Metzenbaum Scissors
  - Operating Scissors – Blunt-Blunt, Sharp-Blunt, Sharp-Sharp
  - Mayo Scissors
  - Range of Haemostats both straight and curved
  - Rochester Carmalt Forceps
  - Rat Tooth Forceps
  - Dressing Forceps
  - Allis Tissue Forceps
  - Backhaus Towel Forceps or Jones Towel Forceps
  - Suture needles\*
- **Castration Kit (Canine)**
  - Needle Holder
  - Metzenbaum Scissors
  - Operating Scissors – Blunt-Blunt, Sharp-Blunt, Sharp-Sharp
  - Mayo Scissors
  - Range of Haemostats both straight and curved

- Rat Tooth Forceps
- Dressing Forceps
- Allis Tissue Forceps
- Backhaus Towel Forceps or Jones Towel Forceps
- Scalpel handle
- Suture needles\*
  
- **Castration Kit (Feline)**
  - Mosquito Forceps (straight & curved)
  - Rat Tooth Forceps
  - Dressing Forceps
- **Orthopaedic Surgical Instruments (either in kit or separate)**
  - Periosteal Elevator
  - Kern Bone Holding Forceps
  - Gigli Wire Saw & Handle
  - Liston Bone Cutting Forceps
  - Rongeurs
  - Bone Rasp
  - Osteotome
  - Bone Mallet
  - Bone Curette
  - Intramedullary Pins
  - Intramedullary Pin Chuck
  - Intramedullary Pin Cutter
  - Orthopaedic Wire
  - Wire Twister
  - Crimps & Crimper (De Angelis Repair)
  - External Fixation Kits
  - Bone Plates & Screws
  - Powered (air or electric) drills and saws
  - Retractors:
    - Senn Retractor
    - Weitlaner Retractor
    - Gelpi Retractor
    - Balfour Retractor
    - Finochietto or Frazier Rib Spreaders.
- **Stitch Kit**
  - Needle Holder
  - Metzenbaum Scissors
  - Operating Scissors – Blunt-Blunt, Sharp-Blunt, Sharp-Sharp
  - Mayo Scissors
  - Range of Haemostats both straight and curved
  - Rat Tooth Forceps
  - Dressing Forceps
  - Allis Tissue Forceps
  - Backhaus Towel Forceps or Jones Towel Forceps
  - Scalpel handle
  - Suture needles\*

\*if using cassette suture material instead of swaged on packets

### *Surgical Equipment – Consumables*

- Scalpel blades
- Gauze Swabs
- Laparotomy/Abdominal Swabs
- Suture Material
- Bandage & Wound Dressing Materials
- Jackson Pratt Drains
- Penrose Drains
- Casting Material
- Splints
- Elizabethan Collars.

### *Surgical Equipment – Monitoring*

- Anaesthetic Chart
- Single / Multiparameter Monitors
  - SpO2
  - ETCO2
  - Blood pressure
  - Temperature
  - ECG
  - Pulse Oximeter
  - Apalert or similar respiration monitor
  - ECG
  - Blood Pressure
  - ETCO2
  -
- Nurse
  - Vital signs
  - Pain
  - Anaesthetic depth
  - Reflexes

### *Surgical Equipment – Machine*

- Anaesthetic Machine:
  - Rebreathing Bags
  - Non Rebreathing Circuits
  - Rebreathing Circuits
  - Scavenging System
  - Vaporiser
  - Soda Lime
  - Isoflurane
- Heating – Mat, Table
- Positioning / Restraint Aids
- Suction
- Cautery
- Gas Cylinders/Banks or Oxygen Generator:
  - O2
  - Air
  - Flow Meter
  - Connections
- Fluid pump.

### *Surgical Equipment – Miscellaneous*

- Tattoo Outfit
- Catheters
- Laryngoscope Handle & Blades
- Instrument trolley
- Kick Bucket
- Stomach tubing
- Biopsy Needles
- Clippers.

### *Imaging Equipment*

- X-ray Machine & Table
- Digital or Computer Radiography System, or manual/automatic development
- If manual or automatic development
  - Developing Chemicals
  - Tanks / Automatic Processor
  - Cassettes
  - Film
  - Red Light
- Measuring Callipers
- Label Equipment
- Light Box
- Hangers
- Lead Apron, Gloves, Thyroid Collars
- Positioning Aids
- Markers
- Personal Monitoring Badge
- Technique Chart

### *Pathology Equipment*

- In-house haematology and biochemistry, or external laboratory submission
- Microscope
- Microscope slides and coverslips
- Biopsy punch
- Refractometer
- Reagent Tests (Combur 9, Asostix etc.)
- Snap testing ( Parvo, HWT, FIV/FeLv)
- Faecal Flotation
- Cytology stains and associated equipment
- Necropsy kit or appropriate individual instruments
  - saw
  - Tissue forceps, scalpels, knives and scales
- Specimen containers

## Unit Descriptors

### **Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing**

Candidates undertaking equine elective units **MUST** have access to work experience and/or employment within an equine veterinary practice.

This qualification is the industry qualification for persons operating as veterinary nurses within veterinary practices. Whilst undertaking this qualification, the learner must have access to a veterinary practice.

**\*\* Note:** In Western Australia, students are required to be approved by the Veterinary Surgeons Board and be supervised by a registered veterinary surgeon to perform the duties and veterinary services as a veterinary nurse, as set out in the Regulations 65 and 66 of the Veterinary Surgeons Regulations of 1979.

## Work placement

Several of the units of competency in the Certificate IV include a mandatory work placement. The initiative to include minimum hours of work placement during the completion of a veterinary nursing qualification, responds to industry concerns, including:

- inconsistent training and assessment outcomes
- varying levels of experience
- workplace exposure provided by RTOs.

**\*\* Note:** In Western Australia, students are required to be approved by the Veterinary Surgeons Board and be supervised by a registered veterinary surgeon to perform the duties and veterinary services as a veterinary nurse, as set out in the Regulations 65 and 66 of the Veterinary Surgeons Regulations of 1979.

### What is work placement?

For the purpose of this guide, the term work placement is used to describe any type of placement or experience in the workplace that formally contributes to the assessment process. This includes the need to collect and use information from the work placement as part of the student's overall assessment.

### Work placement requirements in Training Packages

In the ACM Animal Care and Management Training Package requirements for specified hours of work have been documented in two places:

- in qualification descriptions
- in assessment requirements of units of competency.

### Qualification descriptions

The need to complete specified hours of work is noted in the qualification descriptions so that anyone accessing the qualification can be immediately aware of this requirement. However, strictly speaking, the requirement itself is part of the assessment requirements of individual units of competency. Below are the two qualification descriptions with the 'hours of work' requirement highlighted.

#### **ACM40418 Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing**

##### *Qualification Description*

This qualification reflects the role of a veterinary nurse who works under the supervision of a registered veterinarian to provide nursing care to animals, to support veterinarians to carry out medical and surgical procedures, and to support clients to maintain health of animals.

The Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing requires access to patients (animals), clients, medical and surgical cases, veterinary staff, and practice policies and procedures.

To achieve this qualification, the candidate must have completed at least 240 hours of work as detailed in the Assessment Requirements of the units of competency.

## Work placement details in assessment requirements

The requirement to undertake a particular number of hours of work is specified in the assessment requirements of units of competency. Not every unit contains the requirement. In the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing, the core VET coded units include the work placement requirement.

The wording of the assessment requirement for workplace evidence was carefully considered and negotiated with various stakeholders. The number of hours is just one of the pieces of performance evidence required in each unit.

The performance evidence always begins with the following statement:

*An individual demonstrating competency must satisfy all of the elements and performance criteria of this unit. There must be evidence that the individual has:*

This is followed by a list specific to the unit and where the work requirement is present, the additional words are added:

- *performed the activities outlined in the performance criteria of this unit during a period of at least 240 hours of work in a [detail of location, i.e. veterinary clinic, veterinary hospital].*

The 240 hours specified in the units is a total number of hours for the qualification. It is not 240 hours per unit.

Some examples of the wording in the performance evidence of assessment requirements are given below and the number of hours highlighted:

### **Assessment requirements for ACMVET401 Coordinate veterinary reception duties**

An individual demonstrating competency must satisfy all of the elements and performance criteria of this unit. There must be evidence that the individual has:

- coordinated and undertaken the admission of a minimum of five patients, covering two species, for routine and non-routine procedures
- carried out triage procedures for a minimum of two patients
- demonstrated a simulation of applying animal first aid in order to sustain life and minimise pain
- coordinated the discharge of a minimum of three patients
- communicated appropriately with practice staff and clients in varying situations
- performed the activities outlined in the performance criteria of this unit during a period of at least 240 hours of work in a veterinary clinic.

### **Assessment requirements for ACMVET407 Carry out medical nursing routines**

An individual demonstrating competency must satisfy all of the elements and performance criteria of this unit. There must be evidence that the individual has:

- preparing for and assisted with medical procedures as directed by the veterinarian that include at least three of the following procedures:
  - major ear clean
  - urinary catheterisation
  - major enemas
  - thoracocentesis
  - cerebral spinal fluid tap
  - blood transfusion
  - endoscope/bronchoscope/laparoscope
  - electrocardiogram (ECG)
- prepared for and performed medical procedures under immediate veterinary direction that include at least three of the following:
  - administration of oral medication
  - administration of subcutaneous and intramuscular injections
  - nail/hoof or feather/beak trimming
  - administration of IV injections
  - administration of oxygen supplementation by at least two of the following methods: fly-by, nasal prongs, head tent, mask, oxygen cage, placed nasal tube
- administration of intravenous (IV) fluids and blood products (via gravity feed or fluid pump) on at least three occasions
- prepared, operated, calibrated (where required), cleaned, sterilised, stored and maintained medical equipment

- appropriately handled and restrained animals to minimise animal stress and discomfort
- performed the activities outlined in the performance criteria of this unit during a period of at least 240 hours of work in a veterinary clinic.

<b>Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing units</b>	<b>Work placement hours required</b>
ACMVET401 Coordinate veterinary reception duties	240 hours
ACMVET402 Apply imaging routines	240 hours
ACMVET403 Perform clinical pathology procedures	240 hours
ACMVET404 Perform practice office procedures	240 hours
ACMVET405 Coordinate and perform surgical nursing routines	240 hours
ACMVET406 Nurse animals	240 hours
ACMVET407 Carry out medical nursing routines	240 hours
ACMVET408 Provide nutritional advice and support for animals	240 hours
ACMVET409 Provide specific animal care advice	240 hours
ACMVET410 Carry out veterinary dental nursing procedures	240 hours
ACMVET413 Prepare for anaesthesia and monitor animal anaesthesia and analgesia	240 hours
ACMVET416 Assist with the preparation of veterinary drugs and poisons	240 hours

# Opportunities and challenges

## Opportunities

**For students, work placements (practical placements, placements) are an opportunity to:**

- learn in a workplace relevant to their future career
- talk, listen and learn from experienced workers who will help students put theoretical learning into practice, and answer questions about wider areas of work and future opportunities in the industry
- practise skills over a period of time in real life situations, in different contexts and with different individual clients
- have access to real work technologies, equipment, clients and procedures
- have exposure to both normal operating procedures and unplanned contingencies

**For RTOs, work placements enable individual trainers and assessors to:**

- keep up-to-date and tailor training and assessments to current industry practices
- develop networks and professional relationships with industry staff which increases the value and quality of the education provided to students
- engage industry and work with them to interpret and translate VET assessment requirements

**For 'host employers' or individual organisations there are opportunities to:**

- have more control over the quality of training and assessment outcomes
- provide the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the education and development of candidates
- improve consistency of learning outcome and skills of new entrants to the industry
- develop skills of internal staff in management – supervision, mentoring, training and assessment
- create opportunities for building employer/RTO partnerships for staff training purposes
- promotion of the sector and influencing career choices – dispelling unwarranted stereotypical views
- support good training and development outcomes – increased completion rates and productivity improvements
- increase of staff morale – increase motivation of employees.

## Challenges

Partnership arrangements rely on a clear understanding of each party's role and responsibilities. The lack of a coordinated and planned approach between the employer and the RTO assessor may lead to students having difficulty in being assessed as competent. Problems can emerge when:

### Employers:

- do not understand that competency based assessment processes are evidence based and relate to the requirements of a unit of competency
- do not provide adequate time or opportunities for students to practise their skills in the workplace
- do not have staff who are competent themselves to review the student's work practices
- are unclear about their role in the assessment process

### RTOs:

- do not organise enough opportunities or time in work placement for employers to make confident reports about the skills of the students
- do not have assessors with current vocational competency
- do not maintain the relationship with the employer to check and monitor the student's progress
- do not sufficiently plan for on-site assessment and cause disruption to work procedures.

## Organising work placements

Depending on the size of the RTO, the number of students who require placements and the number of available host organisations it may be advisable for the RTO to create a Placement Coordinator role within the RTO. Even if no one holds this role in a formal sense, someone needs to be delegated the following responsibilities:

- identifying potential organisations and specific worksites for placements relevant to the requirements of the training package (this means going beyond just identifying an organisation in the industry that is close to the RTO and willing to take students – the organisation must have all the resources and equipment in place that will allow the student the full range of opportunities to learn to develop the skills outlined in the performance criteria in the specified units of competency)
- Ensuring Western Australian Students have applied for authorisation as a trainee veterinary nurse with the Veterinary Surgeons' Board prior to commencing work placement
- negotiating times, dates and learning outcomes for each placement with the host and match these with students
- set up initial meetings between the host organisation, student and coordinator (or RTO trainer/assessor)
- providing initial and ongoing support to the host organisation/employer.

A similar role is required within each host organisation, a contact person who will be responsible for:

- negotiating times, dates and required learning outcomes for each placement with the RTO and match these with available supervisors/mentors
- assigning a supervisor/mentor to each student and ensuring that the person is aware of their responsibilities.

### Work placement agreements

Work placement agreements should be signed by the RTO, host organisation and student for each placement. There is a list of resources at the end of this guide that provide sample documents.

### Workplace health and safety

Workplace Health and Safety requirements in relation to work placements and the agreements between training providers and work placement providers vary across jurisdictions. The RTO will need to make sure that the workplace chosen provides a safe environment for its students, that relevant workplace health and safety training has taken place before the work placement and that the worksite provides a safety induction for the student and appropriate supervision during the entire placement. RTOs should ensure they meet the insurance obligations of their registration against the RTO standards and seek advice from their RTO regulator and/or their workcover insurance provider.

### Work placements and payment

Fair Work Australia has a factsheet available referring to 'Vocational Placement' which makes it clear that under the Fair Work Act there are conditions which must be met for a person to be recognised as on a vocational placement. These conditions can be summarised as:

- must be a placement, arranged by the training provider or student as a course requirement
- must be no entitlement to pay
- placement must be done as a requirement of an education or training course
- placement must be approved (all RTOs that are implementing the requirements of units of competency will meet this as they are 'approved' by their regulator to deliver the program).

See [www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/policies-and-guides/fact-sheets/unpaid-work/student-placements](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/policies-and-guides/fact-sheets/unpaid-work/student-placements).

## Insurances

Legal and insurance requirements vary between organisations, states and territories. RTOs must undertake their own research to ensure local requirements are met. Typical roles and responsibilities in work placement include:

### ***Work Placement Coordinator at the RTO***

- Ensures West Australian students are authorised by the Veterinary Surgeons' Board prior to Work Placement
- Organises placement with students and employers
- Works with the employer to plan a work program for the student
- Keeps in contact with students and employers during the placement
- De-briefs student and employer at the end of the placement
- Takes responsibility for documentation required by the training organisation including signed work placement agreement with an employer and student
- Follows the procedural requirements of the training organisation in relation to insurance and legal considerations
- Ensure all necessary student work placement checks have been obtained by students and workplace employers have confirmed the student will be allowed admission into the workplace

### ***Employer/Workplace Supervisor***

- Gives the student an introduction and induction on workplace policies and procedures
- Takes responsibility for the direction of the student during the placement
- Provides a safe workplace, free from bullying and verbal, physical, racial and sexual abuse
- Provides opportunities to develop knowledge and skills
- Fills in relevant sections of the student's workbook, including a student evaluation
- De-briefs the student at the end of the placement
- Follows legal and insurance requirements during the placement

### ***Student***

- Obtains consent for work placement from a parent or guardian, if under 18 years of age
- Acts in a professional and courteous way and respects the rights of other people in the workplace
- Follows the policies and procedures of the host workplace
- Keeps information about the host business confidential unless agreed to by the employer
- Pro-actively seeks to develop skills and knowledge during the placement to ensure readiness for workplace assessments
- Completes student workbook or other documentation required by the training organisation
- Participates in a de-brief with the employer and work placement coordinator.

## RTO responsibilities

A robust placement program is one mark of a quality training organisation. Good work placement can be used as a very effective marketing tool both with industry and prospective students.

### Establishing the program

A first step in establishing and maintaining a successful work placement program is to develop clear systems, procedures and documentation to support it. Each RTO needs to consider:

- program objectives and priorities
- roles and responsibilities in the RTO
- step-by-step process of managing work placement
- documentation and recording systems to support the program.

For more detailed advice, see *Sample Checklist: Developing a Work Placement Program* at the end of this guide.

### Organising placements

Once systems and procedures are in place, organising placements can begin. Probably, the most important factor that will impact your success in finding student placements is the quality of your industry networks. RTOs build these networks in many ways – some are personal, others are more systematic. Relationships with industry across all areas of the RTO operation will affect industry willingness to host your students. For more information, see *Sample Checklist: Building and Maintaining Industry Networks* at the end of this guide.

### Getting the timing right

To make sure your students are providing the best possible value to employers, it makes sense for practical placements to happen towards the end of a course rather than at the beginning. At a minimum, you should be confident that students going on work placement are able to:

- interact positively with others, both colleagues and clients
- work safely
- show an understanding of the sector of work
- behave in a professional manner.

Timing also needs to be considered from the employer perspective. It is important to be aware of the seasonal factors that impact host organisations. And it cuts two ways – busy periods may mean it is impossible for some organisations to host students, but for some businesses peak times may mean they have lots of work that students can assist with.

### Matching workplaces and students

Not all students are suited to all workplaces. Here are a few things to consider when placing individual students:

- What does the employer need?
- What are the employer's expectations?
- What is the level of risk involved in the proposed work activities?
- How ready is the individual student to undertake the activities?
- How much preparation is needed for the student and the employer prior to the placement?
- What are the practical issues to consider:
  - travelling times
  - hours of work.

## **Planning student work programs**

It is the RTO's job to work with the employer to agree what the student will do. The closer the work activities mirror the competencies being developed in the student's course the better. But of course, this is not always possible and will vary from sector to sector. Knowing the skills profile of individual students will allow you to confidently work with employers to tailor programs to meet specific needs.

Each student should have a workbook where they can record the types of work they've done, where the employer is able to make comments and complete an evaluation at the end of the placement.

## **Communicating with students and employers**

It is the RTO's role to manage all communication with students and employers. In essence, this breaks down into three components:

- **Before the placement begins:**
  - finding the placement
  - preparing students and employers and managing expectations
- **During the placement:**
  - visiting the workplace (may not always be possible)
  - communicating by email or phone
  - providing support and troubleshooting
- **At the end of the placement:**
  - organising a de-briefing.

## Assessment in the workplace

Trainers and assessors in this sector often need to be very flexible in response to workplace demands and the day-to-day demands of a busy work environment can make it hard for managers and supervisors to find time to contribute to supervising students on placement, or by contributing to assessment processes. However, trainers and assessors should involve workplace representatives by:

- making sure that they are clear about their role in contributing to staff development
- explaining the assessment process, the assessment tasks and the timeframes in the assessment plan, including when the assessor will be at the workplace to carry out any required direct observations
- requesting feedback in the form of written or oral third party reports.

### Partnership arrangements

Assessment arrangements can take many forms in the veterinary nursing sector, and good assessment practice will often require a partnership arrangement. For example:

- the employer might take responsibility for skill development through learning on the job, and the RTO might provide assessment only services
- employers might enter into agreements with RTOs to provide coordinated approaches to assessment
- there might be an auspicing arrangement, where the employer delivers training and assessment and the RTO signs off and awards the qualifications and statements of attainment see [www.asqa.gov.au/news/2080/partnering-and-auspicing-arrangements-reminder.html](http://www.asqa.gov.au/news/2080/partnering-and-auspicing-arrangements-reminder.html)
- students might be enrolled in full-time study programs with work placements that require the employer to provide third party reports.

A project conducted by the National Quality Council (NQC) in 2008, *Investigation into industry expectations of VET assessment*<sup>1</sup> identified a growing requirement from industry for training providers to reflect a closer client focused approach in the design and contextualisation of training programs and assessment to reflect enterprise needs. Tools which can assist the collaboration between RTOs and industry (including private enterprise, business, community organisations and other workplaces) can be found in the resource *Industry Enterprise and RTO Partnership: A guide for RTOs, enterprises and industry groups*<sup>2</sup>.

The project report highlighted that satisfaction with assessment processes and outcomes were highest when there was a strong partnership between the enterprise and the RTO, and when training and assessment was directly linked to the workplace.

### Gathering evidence

An RTO trainer or assessor cannot be present the whole time a learner is on a work placement. They need to know what the student has learned, as well as what they have done. This will contribute to better learning outcomes for the student and also provide evidence for formal assessment. They must rely on the evidence gathered by those in the workplace. One way to do this is through the use of a placement log book.

Essential features of a log book should include:

- details of the student, their supervisor, the location, time and length of practical placement
- ability to record day to day activities on specific days
- work activities broken into specific steps

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<sup>1</sup> National Quality Council (NQC), 2008, *Investigation into industry expectations of VET assessment* is available at: <http://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A49630>.

<sup>2</sup> National Quality Council (NQC), 2010, *Industry Enterprise and RTO Partnership: A guide for RTOs, enterprises and industry groups* is available at <http://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A42306>.

- space for sign off and comments/feedback from the supervisor or manager observing the workplace activities.

The practical log book can be used to capture three types of evidence: direct, indirect and supplementary:

- **Direct evidence** refers to the activities (demonstration of skills and knowledge) the assessor witnesses the learner completing e.g. the assessor visits the workplace and directly observes the candidate undertaking the tasks.
- **Indirect evidence** refers to the activities completed by the learner that are witnessed by a third-party e.g. the log book is completed by the learner's direct supervisor or manager, describes the actions learners have undertaken in the workplace and the competencies they have been able to demonstrate under changing circumstances.
- **Supplementary evidence** refers to the evidence of competency found in written assessments, audio/video recordings, questioning and documented past performances e.g. the log book may have room for the candidate to reflect their specific feelings and experiences of the workplace and activities they've completed – what do they feel confident about; what do they think they could improve; what interests them?

**A log book is not by itself an assessment tool.** It may contribute to the collection of evidence for assessment but the RTO will need to develop assessment tools for single units and/or clusters of units of competency. As the hours requirement is written in the form of:

- *performed the activities outlined in the performance criteria of this unit during a period of at least xxx hours of work*

It will be necessary to document the performance criteria for those units of competency and relate it to the hours of work.

## Sample checklists and documentation

This section includes a number of sample checklists and other documentation that may be used and tailored by an RTO to support work placement:

- Sample checklist: developing a work placement program
- Sample checklist: building and maintaining industry networks
- Sample checklist: pre-placement
- Sample information sheet for employers
- Sample employer checklist: introducing a student to the workplace.

## Sample checklist: Developing a work placement program

The checklist below is presented as a possible table of contents for work placement policy and procedures manual.

Key areas	Action required
<p>Vision and objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall goals</li> <li>• Which courses?</li> <li>• Which sectors?</li> <li>• Which skills?</li> <li>• Duration of placements?</li> </ul>	
<p>Roles and responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work placement coordinator</li> <li>• Individual teachers</li> <li>• College administration</li> <li>• Marketing staff</li> </ul>	
<p>Step-by-step process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organising placements</li> <li>• Preparing students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing work programs</li> <li>• managing expectations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Preparing employers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing work programs</li> <li>• managing expectations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Coordinating documentation</li> <li>• Ongoing contact during placement with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students</li> <li>• employers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• De-briefing processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students</li> <li>• employers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Management of student workbooks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evaluation and competency mapping</li> <li>• integration into overall course assessments</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Contingency measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• student illness</li> <li>• cancellation by employers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Continuous improvement actions</li> </ul>	

## Sample checklist: Building and maintaining industry networks

Does my RTO...?/Do I....?	Yes/No    Action
Use industry people to help guide our course development and operations?	
Make regular contact with my industry networks?	
Let my industry networks know about the way we train our students?	
Have industry people as guest speakers in our courses?	
Have ongoing conversations with industry as a matter of course?	
Ask industry what they need?	
Have trainers and assessors with current industry experience?	
Have trainers and assessors that actively participate in industry networks?	
Keep contact with graduates once they are out there working in industry?	
Use our graduate pool as a source of work placements?	
Promote the benefits of work placement to our industry networks?	

## Sample checklist: Pre-placement

Have we (the RTO)...?	Action required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepared the employer:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided customised employer information</li> <li>• Developed the work program</li> <li>• Managed expectations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepared the student:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided customised student workbook</li> <li>• Developed the work program</li> <li>• Managed expectations</li> <li>• Obtained required mandatory checks</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed and checked relevant documentation:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement to be signed by employer, RTO and student</li> <li>• Confirmed insurance details</li> <li>• Confirmed and acted on any legal requirements</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put in place procedures or schedule for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring and contact during placement</li> <li>• De-briefing at end with student and employer</li> <li>• Collecting and integrating information from placement into overall student assessment</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

## Sample: Information sheet for employers

Thank you for becoming involved in our Work Placement Program. Your involvement will provide students with great exposure to the real world of industry and help them develop the practical skills that industry needs – by putting theory into practice.

For host employers, work placement:

- provides access, without obligation, to potential trained employees
- enhances productivity in your industry by making training programs more relevant
- positions your organisation as one which cares about the industry's future by helping students improve their skills and increase their employment opportunities.

### How does it work?

Usually a training organisation (TAFE, private college, school etc.) has a work placement coordinator whose job it is to match students and employers in terms of skills to be acquired and opportunities for learning in the workplace.

The coordinator will contact you to discuss details of the proposed placement, including:

- any special requirements you have before the students starts at your workplace
- the timing of the placement, including starting and finishing times
- the type of work the student will be doing while at your workplace
- who will act as the student's workplace supervisor?

You may also wish to interview the student before the placement starts to make sure that he/she is appropriate for your organisation.

### What sort of work can the student do?

This varies greatly depending on the industry sector and your business. What the student does in your organisation really depends on how your business works and what you need. The RTO work placement coordinator will work with you to come up with a work program. Each student will also have a workbook, where they can record the types of work they've done. The student will ask you to confirm these activities by completing relevant sections of their workbook.

By the time the student begins a work placement, he or she should be able to:

- *[insert information according to placement]*.

Of course, they may have only used these skills in a simulated environment, and not in the workplace, so they will need some supervision in the workplace.

## Sample employer checklist: Introducing a student to the workplace

Treat a student in your workplace as you would a new employee. An induction session will be of great benefit to both you and the student. You may need to point out things that your experienced staff members take for granted. Take some time to think about this before the student arrives in your workplace.

### Student Induction Checklist

Times for starting, finishing and breaks		
Names and roles of key personnel		
Location of facilities		
Work health and safety practices used in your workplace: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any risks or hazards</li> <li>• Emergency procedures</li> </ul>		
Treatment of confidential information		
Other information about the organisation		
Overview of what the student will be doing		

## Sample work placement log

Student Name: _____				Student No: _____			
Qualification: _____							
Total hours required: _____				Work Placement Location: _____			
Date	Start time	End time	Hours worked	Details of work tasks	Linked to which unit/element	Workplace signature	Student signature
<b>Total hours worked</b>							

This is a layout for a very simple work placement log. It allows the student to keep the hours, and requires a signature from the workplace and the student to agree that the work was done and the hours were as indicated. In this example, the student is cross referencing what they do to particular elements and related performance criteria within the unit of competency. This could only happen if there was a plan at the start of the placement that the student and the workplace supervisor were going to concentrate on the areas covered by specific units of competency. Alternatively, a more detailed mapping of all units of competency, elements and performance criteria could be provided with the student ticking off those covered.

## Useful information

Here are some links below to some useful information:

Vocational Placements – A guide to vocational placements for Queensland RTOs  
<http://education.qld.gov.au/students/placement/work/vocation.html>

Student Placements – Fair Work Ombudsman  
[www.fairwork.gov.au/pay/unpaid-work/student-placements](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/pay/unpaid-work/student-placements)

Student Work Placements – A health and safety guide  
[www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/student-work-placement-guide](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/student-work-placement-guide)