

# Applying to study veterinary medicine



What parents, teachers,  
and career advisers  
need to know

# The facts at a glance

**It's only impossible to get into vet school if students don't apply!**

**A veterinary degree is a passport to a wide range of career opportunities**

Not just looking after people's pets or farm animals.

**There are several ways to get into vet school; applying to the standard degree programme isn't the only option**

There are gateway and foundation programmes which require lower grades and provide students with a preparatory year before entering the standard degree programme. There are also widening participation schemes and graduate level entry options.

**No UK vet school requires straight A\*s**

Typical conditional offers for the standard degree programme range from AAB to A\*AA at A-level, and vet schools can make reduced contextual offers depending on an individual's circumstances.

**UK vet schools don't have a preference as to whether students sit A-levels, Highers and Advanced Highers, or the International Baccalaureate**

They can make conditional offers across all of these examination systems.

## Students can apply from all educational and financial backgrounds

If students are from educationally or financially disadvantaged backgrounds, all of this information will be taken into account as part of the selection process.

## Students can apply to vet school more than once

They're not penalised if they re-apply to vet school following an unsuccessful application.

## Most schools only require a couple of weeks of work experience

Some now accept online work experience as part of this.

## Each applicant is assessed as an individual

Their school's track record of successful or unsuccessful applications has no impact on the outcome of their application.

## Getting into vet school is in no way based on 'who you know'

Each vet school has robust and objective selection criteria to ensure admissions are as fair and transparent as possible.

## It's not just about the animals

One of the most vital parts of being a vet is being able to interact with animal owners and keepers. So, people-focused skills like communication and teamwork are important for students to demonstrate in applications.

# 1

## Introduction



Applying to study veterinary medicine is often perceived as highly competitive and the course is regularly touted as one of the hardest to get on to. But it's more achievable than most people think, and it's not just about grades.

We know that parents, teachers and careers advisers play a pivotal role in supporting and inspiring students to navigate their different career choices, so we want to equip you with the key facts and resources to inform students from all backgrounds about the different routes into veterinary medicine.

In this guide we cover:

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# 2

## Myths vs. facts



**Myth**

**It's extremely competitive, so it's nearly impossible to get an interview**

**Fact**

Approximately 2,400 people apply for 1,200 places to study veterinary science, so applicants have around a 50% chance of gaining a place in their first year of application (Veterinary Schools Council Admissions Guide, 2021).

The number of applicants who are invited to interview depends on the vet school and the criteria they use to select for interview. The [Vet Schools Council \(VSC\) admissions guide](#) gives approximate figures and the criteria used for each vet school. The University of Bristol has removed the requirement for interviews entirely.

The key takeaway is: It's only impossible to get an interview if students don't submit an application.

**Myth**

**Applicants need to be straight A\* students**

**Fact**

No vet school in the UK requires straight A\*s. Typical conditional offers depend on the vet school, however they can range from AAB to A\*AA at A-level. The [VSC admissions guide](#) provides more detail on typical conditional offers from each of the UK's vet schools, including subjects required, typically biology and chemistry, and conditional offers for different school examination systems including the International Baccalaureate, SQA Highers and Advanced Highers.

Vet schools don't have a preference as to whether students sit A-levels, Highers and Advanced Highers or the International Baccalaureate – they can make conditional offers across all of these examination systems.

While a certain level of academic attainment is of course required, it's important to remember getting into vet school is not all about grades. Vet schools know that an exam result on a piece of paper does not define a student's potential to be a successful vet. That's why all UK vet schools take into account contextual data when making their admissions decisions. These data allow schools to assess candidates' applications in the light of the educational opportunities they have had, meaning they can also make reduced conditional offers depending on the circumstances.

There are also a range of widening participation schemes and initiatives, including summer schools, booster courses, and foundation and gateway programmes which require lower grades and provide students with a preparatory year before entering the standard degree programme. The [VSC admissions guide](#) and university websites provide more information about the support available and different entry routes. Also, see our examples of widening access schemes for veterinary medicine in [Chapter 4](#).

**Myth****Applicants from private schools are favoured****Fact**

UK vet schools encourage applications from all educational and financial backgrounds. If applicants are from educationally or financially disadvantaged backgrounds, all of this information will be taken into account as part of the selection process.

Vet schools are also very aware that the amount and quality of advice and assistance applicants receive when writing their personal statement varies greatly – and that this could potentially advantage or disadvantage certain applicants. That’s why no UK vet school assesses the quality of the personal statement during the application process, and some vet schools do not consider the personal statement, replacing it with applicant questionnaires.

The British Veterinary Ethnicity and Diversity Society (BVEDS) offers support, signposting, and practical advice to pupils from state schools and/or BAME backgrounds thinking about a career in veterinary medicine. [Contact BVEDS for further information.](#)

There are specific support schemes for applicants that have attended state (non-fee paying) schools or colleges, such as [the Sutton Trust Summer Schools](#) for veterinary medicine.

Also, see our examples of widening access schemes for veterinary medicine in [Chapter 4](#).

**Myth****If you don't get the grades, or aren't predicted them, there's no way to become a vet****Fact**

If you don't get the grades, or aren't predicted them, getting into vet school is still achievable. Traditional application routes are not the only way to get into vet school, different pathways are available. These include gateway programmes and foundation years which require lower grades and provide students with a preparatory year before entering the standard degree programme; widening participation schemes; and graduate-level entry.

The UK's vet schools want as many people as possible to be able to access veterinary education, particularly those from disadvantaged and under-represented groups. So, there's a wide range of support available to get students where they need to be, including summer schools, booster courses, and reduced conditional offer levels depending on an individual's circumstances. The [VSC admissions guide](#) and university websites provide more information about the support available and different entry routes. Also, see our examples of widening access schemes for veterinary medicine in [Chapter 4](#).



**Myth**

**If applicants reapply after an unsuccessful application, they are less likely to be successful this time round**

**Myth**

**Applicants need many, many weeks of work experience in a clinical setting**

**Fact**

Students are not penalised if they re-apply to vet school following an unsuccessful application. Many applicants who were not successful in their first year of application have reapplied successfully and make brilliant vet students. Read this blog post by past BVA President Daniella Dos Santos [If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again.](#)

**Fact**

Most vet schools only require a couple of weeks of work experience, and some now accept online work experience as part of this. In fact, vet schools have a threshold at which additional experience won't give any extra advantage to applicants.

The number of weeks required varies between schools, so be sure to check the [VSC admissions guide](#) for each veterinary school's requirements.

It's also important to remember that non-clinical work experience in an animal husbandry setting can be just as valuable and help prospective vet students understand the context in which vets work, while gaining useful experience to support their application.

If applicants are finding it difficult to secure work experience, it's always worth contacting the admissions team at individual vet schools directly, as they may be able to support and provide advice. Some schools also accept the University of Nottingham's [free online virtual work experience course](#) as work experience for aspiring vets to gain insight into the reality of life as a vet.

Don't forget that students can also use their application to showcase other experiences that may have taught them valuable transferrable skills that will be relevant to the course. For example, part-time jobs in retail and hospitality settings that equip students with crucial communication skills in a client-facing role, or clubs and committees that strengthen a student's ability to manage competing priorities and demonstrate leadership skills.

**Myth**

**Vet schools judge applicants based on their school's reputation, and how many people from that school have previously got in**

**Fact**

Vet schools assess prospective students based on their own individual merit and circumstances, not on their school's track record of successful or unsuccessful applications. If an applicant from a specific school is successful or unsuccessful this will have no impact on applications from students at the same school.

**Myth**

**Applicants need to be from a strong animal or veterinary background**

**Fact**

Only a minority of the UK's veterinary students come from backgrounds where relatives or friends are vets themselves or have links to farming. It most definitely isn't a pre-requisite for getting into vet school.

Vet schools welcome students from all backgrounds no matter where they are from and selection is in no way based on 'who you know.' Each vet school has robust and objective selection criteria to ensure admissions are as fair and transparent as possible.

**Myth**

**Vets just look after our pets and farm animals**

**Fact**

Working as a vet is more varied than most people think. A veterinary degree is a passport to many different opportunities and a varied and fulfilling career. This includes opportunities that go beyond clinical practice, such as university teaching, scientific research, the civil service and government, public health, the military, and the pharmaceutical industry.

# 3

## Top tips when advising budding vets



## Here are our top tips for advising students who express an interest in veterinary medicine.

### Don't write it off

We know that applying to vet school isn't easy, but there are many routes that students can take whatever their background or individual circumstances. So make sure that you highlight to students that there are different options available if they're interested in applying to vet school – whether through the traditional application route, completing a widening participation scheme or entering the course after completing a different science degree.

### Start them early

The deadline for UCAS applications to standard veterinary degree programmes is 15 October, so make sure students are aware of this and don't get caught out. Some gateway and foundation programmes have later application deadlines.

### Make the VSC admissions guide your 'go-to' resource

This [guide](#) is the authoritative resource for everything you need to know about applying to UK vet schools – it's a must-read for teachers, careers advisers and students alike. You'll find information on course overviews; work experience requirements; common policies across the vet schools (eg disability, contextual data, widening participation, personal statement, school exam systems); pre-entry tests, questionnaires and interviews; widening participation and graduate entry routes; and typical conditional academic offers.

### Challenge the misconceptions

By reading this resource you're now equipped with the key facts about applying to study veterinary medicine. We hope this empowers you to challenge the misconceptions that students may have about applying to vet school, emphasise that UK vet schools want to welcome students from all backgrounds, and highlight that it's more achievable than most people first think.

### Remember, it's not all about the animals

Of course, a love for animals and science is a crucial element of being a vet. But one of the most vital parts of being a vet is being able to interact with animal owners and keepers. So, people-focused skills like communication and teamwork are important for students to demonstrate in applications.

### Contact us

If one of your students is interested in becoming a vet but you're not sure how to answer a specific query or want some more information, please reach out to us for more information and support. See more under [Where to go if you need more information or clarification on entry requirements/selection processes on page 17](#).



# Widening access schemes for veterinary medicine



Widening access schemes offer alternative routes into vet school, often with lower grade requirements. Some offer support with university applications and interviews, and others provide foundation and gateway years before entering the standard veterinary degree programme. The list below gives you a flavour of some of the schemes on offer at the UK's vet schools.

### Reach programme for local state schools in Scotland

A programme for the **University of Edinburgh** and **University of Glasgow** – pupils participate in the Reach programme over the three years of their senior phase (S4 to S6). The programme covers everything from introducing pupils to veterinary medicine to supporting their final application to the course. Successful completion of the programme can also lead to adjusted entry requirements.

### Royal Veterinary College Veterinary Gateway programme

**This programme** is aimed at students who might not otherwise meet the Royal Veterinary College's (RVC) standard entry requirements due to social, economic or educational barriers. It integrates an additional preparatory year into the degree to equip students with the knowledge, and skills needed to study veterinary medicine.

### University of Bristol Gateway to Veterinary Science programme

**This programme** is aimed at students who have the potential to become vets but do not meet the standard academic entry criteria to apply directly to the five-year undergraduate veterinary science course. Successful completion of this gateway year allows automatic progression onto the five-year bachelor of veterinary science (BVSc) course.

### University of Liverpool Foundation to Health and Veterinary Studies

**This foundation year** (Year 0) is available to candidates who are interested in clinical sciences, including the BVSc. Types of candidates considered includes those that have had a break from education, did not complete post-16 education or do not hold qualifications that would be considered for direct entry onto the BVSc degree.



### University of Nottingham Veterinary Gateway year

**This gateway year** is aimed at students who meet certain widening participation criteria. After completing the gateway year students automatically join the five-year **veterinary medicine and surgery** course.

### Harper & Keele veterinary school extended degree in veterinary bioscience

**The extended degree** in veterinary bioscience provides a preparatory year for students hoping to progress to veterinary bioscience, veterinary nursing, or veterinary physiotherapy degrees. Candidates will be assessed at the end of their first year of study and progress to either an ordinary degree (BSc veterinary bioscience only), or honours degree (BSc Hons).

### University of Surrey summer school

**Surrey's residential summer school** gives students from widening participation backgrounds the opportunity to experience studying veterinary science over three days. After the summer school, students are invited to sign up to the AIM4University programme, which involves online mentoring and webinars to support students with their applications to university.

**Universities will also have widening participation programmes specifically targeted at schools and/or colleges local to them, as well as university-wide access programmes. Make sure you check individual admissions department pages to see what's available.**

# 5

## Resources





## Where to go if you need more information or clarification on entry requirements/selection processes

If a student is interested in becoming a vet but you're not sure how to answer a specific query about applying to vet school, or you just need some more information, parents, teachers, careers advisers and the students can:

Consult the [VSC admissions processes and entry requirements for UK veterinary schools guide](#)

Reach out directly to vet school admissions departments for more advice based on the student's individual circumstances

Explore [My Vet Future careers hub](#) for more information

Email [BVA](#) or the [Association of Veterinary Students \(AVS\)](#) who may be able to point you in the right direction

## Useful resources

### VSC

[Admissions processes and entry requirements for UK veterinary schools guide](#)

### My Vet Future careers hub

[Information for secondary school students](#) (various articles)

[Experiences of life at vet school](#) (video series)

[What education do I need to become a vet?](#) (article)

[How to ace your vet school interview – 10 top tips](#) (article)

[Overview of widening participation at UK veterinary schools](#) (article)

### BVA blog

[What vet schools wish applicants knew](#)

[If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again](#)

### University of Nottingham

[Virtual work experience and exploring the veterinary profession](#)

### University of Surrey

[A week in the life of a veterinary student](#)

### University of Edinburgh

[Do you have what it takes to be a veterinarian? Introductory course](#)

## Useful snippets of advice from students

We asked current veterinary students for the best pieces of advice they received from teachers and careers advisers when they were applying to vet school. Here's what they picked out:



Take your time with online applications.



Read up on hot topics affecting the veterinary profession and animal welfare. A good place to start is by looking at [BVA blogs](#) or [news items](#), and articles in the vet press.



Be yourself – being able to have a normal conversation is half the battle.



If you're invited to interview, you can prepare by revising from your personal statement, and predicting what questions might be asked about your experience.




Some schools run multiple-mini-interviews (MMIs), where no preparation is necessary. They just want to find out about you, your values and how well you communicate – not how much you know about being a vet.



At interviews you don't need to pretend to know everything, sometimes vet schools ask questions to see how you approach difficult situations, not to see if you know the right answer.

# 6

Case studies: current students and qualified vets





**You may think the odds are against you... believe me they are not. The same obstacles you face can be the reason why you are eligible for a chance.**



## Rhiana Reid-Kanon



Second-year veterinary student



Royal Veterinary College

**My journey to vet school was via the RVC Veterinary Gateway programme**

I grew up in south London, in the borough of Lewisham. I wanted to be a vet from a very young age. I had many small animals throughout my childhood and knew I would like to work with them in some shape or form. My fascination for animals and science has always been apparent and was cultivated as I grew older.

I chose the **RVC Veterinary Gateway programme** because I appreciated the idea of having a course reserved for people who may not have had ideal education or opportunities. The application process took multiple factors into account and allowed you to be judged by individual merit. The course enables people to still achieve their dream despite circumstances that may have hindered them when compared to other applicants.

I found out about the gateway programme when I attended the **Sutton Trust summer school**, as advised by my head of sixth form. It was here that I met people from the same background as me and realised that I still had a chance if the generic way of entering veterinary medicine didn't work out.

The **RVC Veterinary Gateway programme** involves an additional year, designed to prepare you before you enter BVetMed 1. This preparatory year equips you with knowledge and skills so that you can excel in the five-year course and get off to a great start.

### **My advice for students**

If you are thinking of applying to study veterinary medicine but not sure if you can make it, do consider the **RVC Veterinary Gateway programme**. Although you may think the odds are against you... believe me they are not. The same obstacles you face can be the reason why you are eligible for a chance.



**The RVC Veterinary Gateway programme ... enables people to still achieve their dream despite circumstances that may have hindered them when compared to other applicants.**



**It hasn't been the easiest journey but it has been the best! No matter your background, veterinary medicine is open for you!**



## Luke McBlain



Fourth-year veterinary student



University of Glasgow

**My journey to vet school was via the Reach programme**

I am a fourth-year veterinary student at the University of Glasgow. I'm from a working-class town in rural Ayrshire, Scotland. At first becoming a vet felt like a distant reality, both my parents worked in the public sector and I had no relatives in the farming or veterinary industries. However, I made sure that this did not disadvantage me or hold me back.

For me, veterinary medicine is about much more than just my love and compassion for animals. It is about being involved in something bigger, safeguarding and improving animal welfare at every opportunity. I also particularly enjoy the connections you make with all the clients and owners, you've got to be a 'people person' as well as 'animal lover'.

As the first person in my family to go to university, and being only 16 years old when I was applying to vet school, I found the application process challenging. However, I was lucky enough to have a great support system around me. My guidance and English teachers in particular, were just as passionate about my applying to vet school as I was. Their support and expertise helped me along the way with personal statements and UCAS.

Not many – if any – students from my secondary school went on to study degrees like veterinary medicine, medicine or dentistry. Therefore my school was part of a widening participation programme, called **Reach**, with the aim of helping students gain exposure to these courses, and offer them assistance with the application process etc. This opportunity gave me a real insight to not only how the degree at Glasgow works, but also the profession as a whole. I took part in different tasks through this programme including a personal statement workshop. My favourite was the campus week, where we got to go to the vet school, meet with current students and undertake practical classes, as well as learn more in-depth about how to apply.

After hours of studying and undertaking lots of different work experience, I was ecstatic to be offered a place at the university. I moved away to university halls in September 2018 at 17 years old and have never looked back. It hasn't been the easiest journey but it has been the best! No matter your background, veterinary medicine is open for you!

### **My advice for parents, teachers and careers advisers**

Undoubtedly students applying for vocational degrees such as veterinary medicine, medicine or dentistry do need a little more help from their schools. It is important to remember that the UCAS process for veterinary medicine is completely different than that for other courses, with different deadlines and requirements. You have the power to help unleash a young person's potential and make them a world changer. Educate, inspire and empower anyone who shows interest, everyone deserves the opportunity!

### **My advice for students**

Do it! Go for it! Don't be afraid or let anything hold you back. If you have any questions at all that your teacher or careers advisor can't answer, get in touch with the university you are applying for, if they can help you they will.



**Be bold, be brave and have no regrets. Although not always direct, the journey is sometimes just as important as the destination.**



## Reanne McDonald



Second-year veterinary student



University of Liverpool

**My journey to vet school was via a BSc in animal science**

I am a third-year veterinary student at the University of Liverpool. I am a black, dyslexic, second-degree student who grew up in the city of London. Although I didn't own a pet, from a young age I've had an interest in animals, science, and veterinary medicine. Growing up in the city and going to public/comprehensive schools, I wasn't exposed to large animals, pets, and owners on a regular basis. However, I was fortunate enough to have supportive parents who tried to feed my interest taking me to horse riding classes, petting zoos and shows. The more I learnt about the career, the more I knew this was the vocation I wanted to follow.

As you can tell from my opening statement, my journey to vet school was not the usual. I found A-levels challenging; I found I was able to understand the overall content being taught, but struggled to then translate this information during exam-pressured assessments. Expressing my interest in animal-related careers and veterinary medicine, I contacted my careers adviser, who was not very familiar with animal careers or such pathways. Realising the high academic requirements of vet school, I decided to change my career path and apply for a BSc Animal Science course. During my degree, I was diagnosed with dyslexia. This new diagnosis and my passion for veterinary medicine helped me to follow my dream and apply to vet school. Having completed my first degree, I had the experience of the university lifestyle, living away from home, independent study, and time management – key lessons which would benefit me during my veterinary science degree.

### **My advice for parents, teachers and careers advisers**

The right advice at the right time could shape a student's future. Not every student may be able to take a direct route to veterinary school, *but* this should not prevent them from reaching their goal. Knowledge is power, only then can someone make an informed decision on the path they want to lead.

### **My advice for students**

If you have a passion for this kind of career, do it! Learn about the industry by researching and talking to people. You won't get all the answers you're looking for in one place. Be bold, be brave and have no regrets. Although not always direct, the journey is sometimes just as important as the destination.



**Don't make the mistake that I nearly did, don't listen to anyone that says you can't get into vet school – the only reason you won't make it, is if you listen to them!**



## Bridey Shawyer



Final-year veterinary student



University of Nottingham

**My journey to vet school was via a C&G animal management course**

I attended a state school and was the first in my family to attend university. I didn't particularly enjoy school, I obtained six Bs and four As at GCSE, and stayed on at the school's sixth form to study A-level chemistry, biology, maths and PE. Throughout my time at school and sixth form, my teachers weren't very supportive of my veterinary ambitions, and because of this I didn't ever believe I was academically capable.

Within my first week of sixth form, I was told by my head of year that based on my GCSEs, I should look for something 'easier' than veterinary. I wasn't predicted good grades, so teachers didn't challenge me, and consequently I wasn't inspired to push myself. My family really supported me and I was inspired by a vet friend, in hindsight I wish I had listened to them when they believed in me. However, being 16/17 years old, I was very influenced by what my teachers said, and so when they said I couldn't do it, I thought they were right! I was also working part-time at a small animal vet practice and was offered a vet nursing apprenticeship there. This was brilliant for me at the time, as I had a plan B, but didn't help my focus on AS-levels! This continued in a perpetuating cycle of grades falling, having less support, enjoying work more, and all ended in me spectacularly failing my AS-levels (UUEE), and with very little self-confidence in my academic abilities. At this point I was told I had 'just reached my academic peak.'

As a last attempt of getting to vet school, a tutor suggested I try a City & Guilds qualification in animal management and science at Sparsholt Agricultural College. I felt that the chances of getting to vet school were slim, but I wanted to work with animals, so if nothing else, this course would stand me in good stead for that. The support from tutors here could not have been more of a contrast to the sixth form. Within the first week my tutor said to me, 'you **will** go to vet school, I just know it',

and they showed me exactly how capable I was, and how many opportunities this qualification had to offer. From there on, my tutors never once questioned whether it was even a possibility that I wouldn't get a place at vet school. I continued to work at the vets' practice, while getting lots of practical experience at the college's registered zoo and attending various farms for work experience. We were examined with continuous assignments on everything from chemistry to behaviour, and after two years I came away with a distinction\*.

Sparsholt's careers advisor suggested that I apply for the **veterinary gateway/preliminary courses** at the RVC and University of Nottingham. When I got my interview at Nottingham it was like a dream come true, and such a contrast to where I had been 18 months previously! At the interview, I felt very intimidated to be surrounded by so many incredibly intelligent people, all wanting the same thing and all far more academic than myself. I was reassured by the fact that although I may not have got As at A-level, I did have a lot of practical experience under my belt, and I knew Nottingham liked this.

The preliminary year was challenging because I had lots of chemistry and biology to learn! I was in a class of roughly 30 other like-minded people. The preliminary year is aimed at those who have had an alternative route into vet school. Whether that be picking the wrong A-levels, not quite getting the grades or mature



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students with other degrees. I didn't fly through this first year, I failed my chemistry module initially, and we had the added challenge of needing 60% to pass the year (the rest of vet school being 50%). However, it was an incredibly valuable year, and felt it stood me in good stead for the rest of my time at vet school.

On reflection, I think it is important to note that although I have always been tough on myself, vet school is a challenge for everyone, and I have never been at a disadvantage for taking an alternative route into vet school. In some ways, I am grateful that I experienced failure because I am now more determined to not end up there again, and more resilient. Equally, if I had not taken the pathway that I had, I may not be where I am now, and I may not have experienced the things I have. Vet school was always going to be a challenge, but it is so worth it. It has provided some of the most exhilarating, rewarding and incredibly fun moments, and I would re-do it all again in a heartbeat. I have made friendships that will last a lifetime, achieved things that I never even thought was possible, and I can't wait to join what is an incredible profession, in just a few months.

### **My advice for parents/guardians**

They will do it, you raised them after all, they will be brilliant! However, you need to let them do it for themselves, be ready to catch and support them, but don't force them. The best thing you can do for them, is ensure they are surrounded by people who believe they can do it too.

### **My advice for teachers and careers advisers**

Encourage determination, aspirations, and resilience. If someone tells you they want to be a vet, and you don't think they are quite getting the grades they need, find ways to help them improve this, don't down-tread them before they've even started! I hope my story just highlights the impact of poor and brilliant support, and the consequences of both!

### **My advice for students**

Be determined, be resilient and believe in yourselves! Do not make the mistake that I nearly did, do not listen to anyone that says you cannot get to vet school – the only reason you won't make it, is if you listen to them! You will get there, if it's not on the first year of applications, keep trying – this shows resilience, and vet schools are looking for just that!

Don't compare your path to vet school, against others. You may take several years to get there, you may have taken a totally different route in. The only thing your future employers will be bothered about, is whether you have 'MRCVS' at the end of your name.

Find your own support network who will believe in you on the days when you struggle to. I was lucky to have a very supportive family, and an inspiring vet friend at the end of the phone to give me a pep-talk whenever I needed, and even now I rely on them! Whoever you choose, make sure they believe you can do it, more than you believe you can!



**If you love animals, people and science, then veterinary medicine could be for you!  
If I can do it, so can you!**

## Daniella Dos Santos



Small animal vet and past BVA president



Royal Veterinary College



**My journey to vet school was via a degree in molecular genetics**

I grew up in central London, and both my parents are immigrants; my mother was a cleaner and my father a chef. I always knew I wanted to be a vet, but my journey was not a simple one.

As no one in my family had ever been to university, the whole process was unknown to me, and I didn't know anyone that could help me figure it out either. I didn't even have family friends in the veterinary sector, and my school had never dealt with anyone who wanted to be a vet. Everyone kept telling me it was too difficult and I should reconsider being a vet, that people like me didn't make it.... It turns out they were wrong.

It was not easy for me. I ended up doing a degree in molecular genetics first, before getting into vet school at my fifth attempt, and graduated from the RVC in 2012. I went the long way round getting into vet school, but I am so glad I did. My time at university was amazing, learning so many new skills, making great friends and learning from exceptional veterinary surgeons. Since qualifying I have worked with pets, but also have been President of the British Veterinary Association. A veterinary degree opens so many doors!

Veterinary medicine is not just about animals, although it is of course a big part of it, it is also about science and people. If you love animals, enjoy working people and find science fascinating, it is the perfect career for you. Veterinary medicine is open to all.

### **My advice for parents, teachers and careers advisers**

Please do not discourage students from a career in our amazing profession. Despite the stereotype that it is the hardest course to get into and you have to have loads of experience, it simply isn't true and is an accessible profession for many. Alongside the traditional entry routes, there are pathways for those from diverse or widening participation backgrounds; check out the information we have sign posted to. Champion those students you meet with a passion, as we would love to have them in our fabulous profession.

### **My advice for students**

If you love animals, people and science, then veterinary medicine could be for you! Look at the admissions guides for up to date information about entry requirements and work experience, as well as all the ways to become a vet. If I can do it, so can you!





**Never give up or let anyone else tell you what you can or can't do! ...keep going... ask lots of questions and say 'yes' to as many opportunities as possible!**

## Sinead Odle



Third-year veterinary student



University of Bristol



**My journey to vet school was via the accelerated graduate entry programme**

I grew up in north London. I've wanted to be a vet for as long as I can remember! Growing up I've always had cats, other than that I didn't have much experience with animals, but I really enjoyed visits to the vets and found it so fascinating that someone could know what was wrong with an animal that couldn't talk.

As I went through school and college my focus was on achieving the grades to get into vet school, however I found college difficult for many different reasons. My teachers were not the most encouraging, and I felt I was often underestimated and held behind by them. For example, a teacher once told me I should apply for nursing instead of 'vet med' as I wouldn't get in – this really stuck with me, and I doubted myself a lot during that time. I had a lot of support from my family, so I continued to work hard and applied anyway. Unfortunately, I didn't achieve the grades needed to get into vet school, which was devastating!

So, I applied for bioveterinary sciences at the RVC through clearing. I really enjoyed my time at the RVC, and I discovered the different career paths possible within the veterinary profession. This also made me more determined to become a vet! In my final year I applied for the **accelerated graduate entry programme course** at the University of Bristol, which is specifically for graduates and is four years instead of the standard five-year course.

I am now three years in and will be starting my final year soon; I'm loving it and can't wait to be a vet!

### **My advice for parents, teachers and careers advisers**

The main thing I can say is, please never discourage students from trying to achieve their goals! Even if that means they need to work extremely hard to get there and it's not the traditional route. I took to heart a lot of things my teachers said to me, and it added to my lack of confidence, which I am still trying to build to this day. I was so lucky and still am to have the most encouraging family and to have so much support in my personal life. Not all students have this at home, so I really feel it is important for teachers and career advisers to keep encouraging students and stop adding to the glass ceiling so many young people face!

### **My advice for students**

Never give up and never let anyone else tell you what you can or can't do! It is okay to take a longer route than your colleagues and to change your mind. I think there is a lot of pressure, especially when you're going down the veterinary medicine route to constantly compare yourself to others and to perform perfectly all the time, which isn't possible and that's fine. Take your time, keep going for what you want, ask lots of questions and say yes to as many different opportunities as possible!



**A professional network is something unique to an individual and its true value is often overlooked. These relationships greatly contributed to my successful application.**

## Emmanuel Oloyede



Third-year veterinary student



Royal Veterinary College



**My journey to vet school was via the RVC Veterinary Gateway programme**

Growing up in Tottenham, north London, the opportunities to interact from a young age with animals were limited. Despite this, as the cliché goes, I have always had a love and passion for animals from a very tender age. As I grew older, my aspiration to work with animals became synonymous with the desire to educate owners on how best to look after and care for their companion. To this end, I strive to specialise in clinical animal behaviour because in order to provide insight and advice to owners, an animal's behaviour first needs to be understood and comprehended.

Studying on the **RVC Veterinary Gateway** programme was a choice I made to further my professional and educational development. Utilising this preparatory year to focus on developing my analytical, problem solving and practical skills enabled me to enter the first year of the veterinary medicine degree with confidence and knowledge. Applying for the gateway programme was a very smooth process, particularly because I had an understanding of what was required due to the **Sutton Trust summer school**. This, alongside the clear information found on the RVC website, enabled me to be thorough and maximise the quality of my application.

The **RVC Veterinary Gateway** programme is designed to widen participation by encouraging prospective students from disadvantaged backgrounds to apply for veterinary medicine. The programme integrates an additional preparatory year designed to enhance the knowledge and skills required to study veterinary medicine. Upon successful completion of the gateway programme, students automatically progress onto the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine programme.

### **My advice for parents, teachers and careers advisers**

Supporting students throughout the process is key – especially when they're looking for work experience placements as some young people can find this daunting. Remember if students are struggling to get work experience some schools accept virtual work experience for part of their requirements and you can contact schools' admissions departments directly for further advice. Encouraging students to do their research into the admissions process is also paramount so they know exactly what's required of them at each stage.

### **My advice for students**

Developing and maintaining a professional network is something unique to an individual and its true value is often overlooked. I strongly advise any prospective students to be proactive when forming these networks and relationships as this greatly contributed to my successful application for the **RVC Veterinary Gateway**, and the success I have achieved throughout my life.





Your notes



### **British Veterinary Association**

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### **Association of Veterinary Students**

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### **Veterinary Schools Council**

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