

Becoming a Competitive Applicant to Veterinary Programs

Some veterinary schools may allow students to apply after completing all pre-requisite courses, but many will also require completion of a bachelor's degree. Most pre-veterinary students complete a bachelor's degree prior to entering veterinary school. Competitive applicants for admission to veterinary school have a solid academic record, a well-rounded profile of co-curricular experiences, strong scores on the GRE, supportive letters of recommendation, and can clearly articulate their reasons for choosing veterinary medicine.

SELECTING A MAJOR

Applicants with a well-rounded education and a variety of interests and personal experiences are ideal candidates. Students are encouraged to choose a major where they can demonstrate strong overall academic performance while also focusing on developing a solid foundation in the sciences. Veterinary programs look for students who demonstrate the academic ability to handle a rigorous course load.

GPA

GPA's calculated on veterinary school applications normally include coursework done at all colleges attended. If a course is repeated, both grades will be included in the GPA's calculated by the veterinary schools. *Aim for GPA's of 3.3 or higher.*

GRADES

C is an honorable grade, though most, if not all, grades should be higher! Multiple grades below B, especially within the two academic years leading up to veterinary school application, could interfere with competitive admission to veterinary schools. Faced with a likely grade below C, some students should withdraw (W) and later try for a higher grade; consult with your advisors as you decide. More than two W's, however, could indicate a lack of judgment or an inability to handle challenges later in veterinary school.

PRE-REQUISITE AND RECOMMENDED COURSES

There is variability among prerequisite courses required by veterinary schools; students are strongly encouraged to research potential schools carefully to be aware of all prerequisite courses and other admissions policies. Pre-veterinary students who complete the following courses should be well-prepared to apply to a large percentage of veterinary programs. Students should consult with advisors for timeline planning.

PRE-REQUISITES MOST OFTEN REQUIRED BY VETERINARY PROGRAMS

- Two semesters of General Biology with lab – BIO 201/205; BIO 202/206
- Two semesters of General Chemistry with lab – CHM 203/204; CHM 205/206; CHM 285/286 also meets this requirement
- Two semesters of Organic Chemistry with lab – CHM 321/322; CHM 323/324
- One semester of Biochemistry – CHM 371 or CHM 381 (Chemistry majors only)
- Two semesters of General Physics with lab – PHY 201/205; PHY 202/206
- One semester of Microbiology – BIO 350 or BIO 451 (Biology major course)
- Two semesters of English
- One semester of Statistics and/or one semester of Calculus - MTH 231 or MTH 245
- One semester of Anatomy with lab - recommended
- One semester of Physiology with lab - recommended
- Speech and additional Humanities or Social Sciences - recommended

While many veterinary programs may accept AP/CLEP/IB, dual-credit college courses, or community college courses to meet prerequisites, applicants should research individual schools to be certain of their admissions policies. In general, it is normally best to take science pre-requisites from a 4-year university.



PRE-HEALTH GUIDES AND RESOURCES

EDGE PRE-HEALTH ADVISING:

Pre-Health Advisors in the EDGE are available to meet with students one-on-one about their pre-health goals and path. Faculty pre-health advisors are also available to assist students, including a faculty advisor who is designated for Pre-Veterinary. The list of faculty advisors is available at <http://blogs.creighton.edu/edge/pre-health/advisors/>

EDGE PRE-HEALTH SEMINARS:

The EDGE seminars assist students in exploring the veterinary profession, gaining experience in healthcare, and preparing for the application process. Students should participate in PHLC 200 in their sophomore year. In either the junior or senior year, pre-veterinary students are encouraged to participate as "guests" in the Pre-Medicine

Seminar (PMED 300), as the preparation process for veterinary and medical school are similar.

PRE-VETERINARY CLUB:

All pre-veterinary students should participate in the Pre-Veterinary Club. This student-run organization provides leadership opportunities to further explore and gain experience in the veterinary profession. - <https://creighton.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/pre-vetclub>

PRE-HEALTH LISTSERV: Subscribe at: <http://lists.creighton.edu/mailman/listinfo>

HELPFUL LINKS:

creighton.edu/edge - Creighton EDGE

Association American Veterinary Medical Colleges <https://www.aavmc.org/>

Course Scheduling Considerations:

Freshmen and sophomores usually take only two natural science or math subjects each semester.

Chemistry: General Chemistry I (CHM 203/204) and General Chemistry II (CHM 205/206) are typical choices for freshman fall and spring. Students must have a sufficient chemistry background (completion of high school chemistry) and sufficient math background (an ACT math score of at least 24 or an SAT math score of at least 580) to be eligible take General Chemistry in the freshman year. Students may instead take additional math and/or CHM 105 Introductory Chemistry in freshman year to be better prepared for General Chemistry.

VETERINARY SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS:

NATIONAL ADMISSION TESTS: Veterinary programs require the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), and sometimes the Biology subject GRE, in order to apply. Some programs will also accept an MCAT score. Students typically take the GRE approximately 12-15 months before starting a veterinary program, if accepted. To do well on the GRE, it is advisable to allow sufficient study time, especially on the Biology GRE.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION: Students will be required to submit at least three letters of recommendation. It is recommended to obtain at least one letter from a professor who taught the student in a science course. In some cases, a letter from a veterinarian might be required or recommended.

INTERVIEWS: Many veterinary programs will interview promising applicants. The EDGE Career Center offers interview preparation assistance, including mock interviews.



ANIMAL EXPERIENCE

Working with animals in any way can be valuable. Volunteering at shelters or in rescue organizations, participating in summer enrichment opportunities, experience in 4-H and FFA, or even employment as an aide to a veterinarian are all ways to gain animal experience.

SHADOWING/VETERINARIAN

Students must gain knowledge of the profession by shadowing current professionals in their field or working or volunteering with veterinarians. Varied experiences working with different animal populations can be important.

Biology:

General Biology I (BIO 201/205) and General Biology II (BIO 202/206) are typical choices for freshman fall and spring, respectively. Completion of either General Chemistry I (CHM 203) or Introductory Chemistry (CHM 105) is required to take General Biology II.

Math:

Pre-Veterinary students are advised to check school requirements for math and/or statistics course requirements. Typically, MTH 231 or MTH 245 are recommended for Pre-Vet students and both meet Magis Core requirements for Math. Math, physics, and chemistry majors will need more than one semester of calculus and usually should not take MTH 231. Statistics courses are available in multiple majors/departments.

Summer: Science courses may be taken in the summer by pre-veterinary students, but only when there are good reasons for doing so (not just a vague desire to “catch up”) and, in many cases, not at community colleges. Speak with a pre-health advisor before taking summer science courses.

Sample First Semester Schedule: Course sequencing may vary depending upon a student's readiness.

- General Biology I with lab (4 sem. hours)
- General Chemistry I with lab (4 sem. Hours) or Introductory Chemistry (3 sem. hours)
- Magis Core Class (3 or 4 sem. hours) – ENG or Critical Issues + COM 101
- Magis Core Class (3 sem. hours) – PHL or THL
- Maybe another Magis Core Class (3 sem. hours) – PSY or SOC, foreign language

CO-CURRICULAR EXPECTATIONS

Strong academics alone are not enough to be competitive for a veterinary program. It is also important that you are a well-rounded applicant that participates in meaningful activities on your college campus and your community. Veterinary programs value community service, leadership, research and other co-curricular involvement, and with practicing veterinarians.



RESEARCH

Research experience working with vets or animals may add an extra layer to your application if you are particularly interested in research. See the Center for Undergraduate Research and Scholarship for opportunities at <http://www.creighton.edu/curas/>. Local zoos and conservation organizations might also offer research.

VOLUNTEER AND SERVICE

Students should seek out service experiences in settings involving animals, but also in various community or campus organizations as well. Check out the Schlegel Center for Service and Justice for opportunities - <http://blogs.creighton.edu/ccsj/>

LEADERSHIP

Leadership comes in many forms. Creighton has a number of resources to help you gain leadership experience through various organizations and student programming. Be sure to be involved in your Pre-Vet Club and take on a leadership role if possible.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Because veterinarian's patients cannot talk, people tend to think that communication skills are less important. But it is essential for veterinarians to have good communication skills, so their clients can understand what's going on with their animals and do their part to help resolve the problem.