



Veterinary Skills, Training & Enhancement Program

Policies and Procedures

VSTEP acknowledges the generous contribution of the University of Guelph in the development of these policies and procedures.

VSTEP reserves the right to change without prior notice any information contained in this document. The publication of information in this document does not bind VSTEP to the provision of modules, programs, schedules of study or facilities as listed herein.

VSTEP will not be liable for any interruption in, or cancellation of, any academic activities as set forth in this document and related information where such interruption is caused by fire, strike, lock-out, inability to procure materials or trades, restrictive laws or governmental regulations, actions taken by instructors, staff or other members of the University of Guelph community or by others, civil unrest or disobedience, or any other cause of any kind beyond the reasonable control of VSTEP.

VSTEP Admissions Policy

Eligibility

In order to be eligible for the Veterinary Skills, Training and Enhancement Program (VSTEP) an applicant must meet the following requirements:

- Be registered with either the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) in the ECFVG program or the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) in the NEB program or both
- Have received a passing score on the Basic and Clinical Sciences Examination (BCSE)
- Have submitted a complete, current VSTEP application form
- Have participated in an interview and assessment with VSTEP management

Credential Assessment and Language Proficiency

In order to be registered with either the AVMA or CVMA an applicant must submit to the respective association all documents proving their veterinary credentials and language proficiency. Once the association confirms the validity of their degree and the institution

from where they graduated as well as their language proficiency, the applicant is considered registered and is issued a registration number.

VSTEP reserves the right to validate any information provided on the application form.

Acceptance

Acceptance to the VSTEP will be based on a competitive ranking procedure. First priority is given to residents of the province of Ontario. Second priority is given to residents of the remaining Canadian provinces and territories. Final priority is given to international applicants.

Within these three groups a system of ranking is used to identify those applicants with the greatest prospects for success in the program.

Selection Process

The selection process for VSTEP applicants involves the following steps:

1. All application materials are reviewed to confirm the applicant's eligibility and suitability for an interview
2. All suitable applicants are interviewed (in person or by other means)
3. An objective rubric is used to score each applicant. The rubric considers the number of times the applicant has attempted the BCSE, whether the applicant has already passed the NAVLE, whether the applicant has any North American clinical experience, the applicant's answers to clinically-based questions and finally the applicant's traits demonstrating positive attitude, professional behaviour and effective communication skills.
4. All applicants are ranked in their respective priority group and offers of admission are extended accordingly. A waiting list is created and applicants are advised of their position.
5. The applicant must agree to sign the VSTEP contract and provide the non-refundable security deposit.

The balance of fees must be paid prior to the commencement of the program.

Academic Standing

Good Standing

All VSTEP participants accepted into the session and having paid all associated fees are considered to be in good standing.

Eligible to Continue

In order to receive a VSTEP certificate, participants must achieve a passing grade of 50% or higher on all eight modules. Failing any of the eight modules does not result in a requirement to withdraw. Instead a participant may complete the entire course of study including field placement for their own educational purpose even without any prospect of receiving a VSTEP certificate.

Probation

Periods of probation are not offered in VSTEP.

Required to Withdraw

Circumstances that might result in a requirement for the participant to withdraw include a failure to pay all fees associated with the program, a violation of the VSTEP code of conduct, being charged with a criminal offence, deportation or other violation of the terms of the participant's visa.

Shared Responsibilities

The success of each Participant depends above all on their response to the opportunities and responsibilities that VSTEP provides. VSTEP is committed to supporting its Participants in their professional development and responding to their individual needs. VSTEP also recognizes that each Participant **is responsible for:**

- Completing reading and other assignments contributing to independent learning;
- understanding what constitutes Academic Misconduct in accordance with this policy and abiding by VSTEP's policy;
- understanding the requirements to achieve a passing grade in any module;
- adhering to any rules of conduct as described in this policy and including those relating to health and safety provided by an instructor or assistant, either in a class, laboratory, seminar or during a field placement;
- checking e-mail accounts regularly and frequently for important communications. (This is the primary conduit by which VSTEP provides notification of events, deadlines and other announcements such as those concerning grades, Participant financial accounts and other official information);
- contacting the Program Manager for clarification of VSTEP policies and procedures.

Conduct During Lectures and Labs

VSTEP Participants are expected to demonstrate respect for the VSTEP code of conduct and other program Participants including:

- Asking or answering a question by raising a hand and waiting for the instructor's acknowledgement;
 - Respect the instructor's directions about when and how questions can be addressed in class and after class;
 - Ensure questions are relevant to the class discussion;
 - Don't monopolize the instructor's time and do give others an opportunity to ask questions;
- Not interrupting other Participants when they are contributing to a discussion or asking a question;
- Ensuring cell phones and other electronic devices do not disturb the learning experience for other Participants;
- Not eating food during lectures or labs;
- Always speaking in the shared language of English so as not to exclude others;
- Holding personal conversations in the hallways outside the lecture or lab area;
- Waiting until the end of the lecture or lab before packing up books and other personal belongings;
- Being prepared and punctual for all lectures and laboratories;
 - Participants should be in their seat at the start of lectures and labs which are scheduled to commence on the hour;
- Leaving the room in the same or better condition than it was entered.

Labs are scheduled to provide optimal teaching coverage and to maintain sufficient levels of materials and supplies. Under no circumstances are participants to attend more than one session of any scheduled lab.

Recording of Teaching Sessions

The recording of someone else's work including a lecture or instructional lab is considered the creation of a copyrightable work, the ownership of which belongs to the instructor. Participants wishing to make an audio recording of any lecture or laboratory for personal study purposes only, must first obtain the verbal consent of the instructor. VSTEP endeavours to canvass its instructors in advance to understand their position on the recording of teaching sessions and will share this information with Participants when requested.

Making video recordings is prohibited and taking photographic images during lectures and labs is discouraged. Before taking any photographic image, Participants must first

obtain the consent of all parties (not just instructors) whose image might be captured in the process.

Under no circumstances should any Participant redistribute any copyrightable work without the written consent of the instructor.

Dress Code

VSTEP participants agree to abide by the dress code requirements as set out by VSTEP instructors or required by the University of Guelph. This may include requirements for surgical scrub wear, laboratory overcoats, coveralls, safety footwear and fluid impervious footwear. Dress code requirements vary by location.

During Lectures: Participants should wear appropriate clothing and footwear. In an effort to respect the learning environment of other Participants, attention should be paid to personal hygiene. Efforts should be made to guard against offensive body and foot odour as well as avoiding the use of strong perfumes and colognes.

During Labs: Participants must wear either clean lab coats or clean coveralls as per the request of the instructor.

When working with small animals, footwear must consist of closed toed shoes or boots, in either case with an impervious upper.

When working with large animals (equine, bovine), footwear must meet approved safety standards as demonstrated by the green safety triangle attached to the footwear.

Long hair must be confined to guard against entanglement with objects and animals.

Surgery and Anesthesia Labs

Clean scrub suits must be worn in all surgery areas during surgery, anesthesia, ophthalmology and dermatology labs. Scrub suit tops must be tucked into suit bottoms.

For warmth, clean lab coats or lab jackets are available to wear overtop and additional personal clothing should not be worn with surgical scrubs.

Hair must be completely covered with a surgical cap.

Balaclavas must be worn over beards.

Nails must be cut short and nail polish removed. False fingernails must be removed.

Stud earrings only are permitted and drop or dangling earrings are prohibited.

Surgical masks must be worn in areas where surgical instruments are being prepared, surgical procedures are in progress or when personnel are scrubbing for surgery.

Cafeteria and Other Areas: Participants must not wear protective clothing including lab coats, surgical scrubs or coveralls in the cafeteria or lecture halls due to the threat of zoonotic disease spread.

PARTICIPANTS SHOULD ENSURE THEY PRACTICE PROPER HAND HYGIENE FOLLOWING EVERY LAB.

During Field Placements: Participants are expected to comply with the dress code specified by their host practitioner.

Special Consideration

VSTEP will consider granting consideration if there are sufficient extenuating medical or compassionate circumstances. Consideration may take one of the following forms:

- extending a deadline;
- allowing the resubmission of an assignment;
- offering a make-up or supplemental test;
- re-weighting the value of module assignments;
- approval to write a missed mid term or final examination; or
- the completion of a module requirement after the end of the program.

Consideration is granted when acceptable medical or compassionate circumstances affect any portion of the program. Generally, employment commitments will not constitute grounds for consideration. Depending upon the circumstances and whether the program requirements are complete, consideration may be granted by the Program Manager.

Participants will need to assess the extent of the difficulty they face and the possible implications on their program work. Circumstances which affect the Participant's ability to attend lectures, write tests or meet assignment deadlines require formal documentation for consideration to be granted. In these instances, the Participant should contact the Program Manager regarding appropriate procedures and documentation.

The Program Manager is the Participant's advisor in all matters pertaining to consideration and can assist in defining an appropriate course of action.

It is the Participant's responsibility to consult the Program Manager as soon as medical or compassionate circumstances affect academic performance, in order to initiate action, and provide any required documentation.

The Program Manager will review all available evidence, including the Participant's performance during the program, when making a decision. Procedures to follow in each

case are outlined below. Questions about procedures and deadlines should be directed to the Program Manager.

Grounds for Consideration

Where possible, requests for consideration are to be accompanied by supporting documentation. Participants unsure of documentation requirements are encouraged to contact the Program Manager.

1. Medical Grounds

For consideration based on medical grounds a Participant may be asked to provide documentation for the period of the illness. The necessity for documentation will depend in part upon the length of the illness and the amount of work missed during this time. If the medical situation results in missed lectures or program work, affects examinations or final assignments the Participant should contact the Program Manager, presenting medical documentation where warranted.

2. Compassionate Grounds

Unforeseen circumstances beyond the Participant's control in either his/her personal or family life may affect academic performance. The procedure to follow to request consideration based on compassionate grounds depends upon the severity of the circumstance and the amount of work missed. Participants should consult with the Program Manager when the situation may result in missed lectures or program work, affects examinations or final assignments. Generally, employment commitments will not constitute grounds for consideration.

Incomplete Program Participation

The Program Manager is responsible for granting consideration, if applicable, for module work. Types of consideration that may be granted by the Program Manager in discussions with the instructor include the setting of a make-up test, re-weighting the value of module assignments, extending a deadline or allowing the resubmission of an assignment. Participants should consult with the Program Manager for advice on an appropriate course of action if the medical or compassionate circumstance is such that it could affect overall program performance.

(a) Participant's Responsibilities

If due to medical or compassionate circumstances a Participant is unable to attend lectures or labs or complete any portion of the module's work including examinations, the Participant should:

1. Inform the Program Manager.
2. Supply any documentation requested by the Program Manager.

3. Complete and submit missed work by the new deadline established by the Program Manager in discussion with the instructor.

(b) Program Manager's Responsibilities

In the event that medical or compassionate circumstances are affecting the Participant's overall performance, the Program Manager will ensure that the Participant's instructors are advised that consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds may be warranted. In such cases the Program Manager may be of assistance in coordinating the instructors' responses to the request for consideration.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is behaviour that erodes the basis of mutual trust, undermines VSTEP's exercise of its responsibility to evaluate Participants' academic achievements, or restricts VSTEP's ability to accomplish its teaching objectives.

Below are descriptions of academic offences considered enforceable by VSTEP.

PARTICIPANTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR KNOWING WHAT CONSTITUTES AN ACADEMIC OFFENCE.

An offence may be deemed to have been committed whether the Participant knew a particular action was an offence or ought reasonably to have known. Whether or not a Participant intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant. Participants must verify the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Participants who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with an instructor or the Program Manager.

Further, as some academic offences may also be viewed as violations of the criminal code and/or civil statutes, Participants may also be subject to criminal prosecution or civil action.

1. Misappropriation of Other's Work

(a) Plagiarism

Plagiarism is misrepresenting the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own. It includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and representing these as one's own thinking by not acknowledging the appropriate source or by the failure to use appropriate quotation marks. In addition to books, articles, papers and other written works, material may include (but is not limited to): literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, art works, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the

results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, and material on the internet. Some examples of plagiarism include:

- submission of a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- buying or selling term papers or assignments;

Participants have the responsibility to learn and use the conventions of documentation suitable to the discipline, and are encouraged to consult with the instructor of the module or the Program Manager for clarification if needed. Participants wishing to use the work of others, from any source, should be aware of copyright laws and other conventions governing intellectual property.

(b) Copying

Copying is similar to plagiarism in that it involves the appropriation of others' work as one's own. It includes copying in whole or in part another's test or examination answer(s), laboratory report, essay, or other assignment.

Copying also includes submitting the same work, research or assignment for credit on more than one occasion without the prior written permission of the instructor(s).

(c) Unauthorized Co-operation or Collaboration

It is academic misconduct to co-operate or collaborate in the completion of an academic assignment, in whole or in part, when the instructor has indicated that the assignment is to be completed on an individual basis.

2. Misrepresentation and Fraud

This category of academic misconduct covers a range of unacceptable activities, including the following:

(a) Impersonation

Impersonation involves having someone impersonate oneself, either in person or electronically, in class, in an examination or in connection with any type of academic requirement, module assignment or material, or of availing oneself of the results of such impersonation. Both the impersonator and the individual impersonated (if aware of the impersonation) are in violation of this policy.

(b) Falsification

It is academic misconduct to submit or present false or fraudulent assignments, research, credentials, or other documents for any academic purpose. This includes, but is not limited to:

- falsified research or lab results and data;
- concocting facts or reference;
- false medical or compassionate certificates;
- false letters of support or other letters of reference;
- falsified academic records, transcripts or other records;
- fraudulent submission practices (e.g., altering date stamps);
- altering graded work for re-submission.

It is also falsification to misrepresent the amount of work an individual has contributed to a group assignment or activity. Both the individual to who work is falsely attributed and those who acquiesce in its attribution commit academic misconduct.

(c) Withholding

It is academic misconduct to withhold records, transcripts or other academic documents with the intent to mislead or gain unfair academic advantage.

(d) Unauthorized Aids and Assistance

It is academic misconduct to use or possess an unauthorized aid, to use or obtain unauthorized assistance, or to use or obtain prohibited material in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work. Such aids or material may include, but are not limited to, specific documents, electronic equipment or devices, and commercial services (such as writing, editorial, software, or research survey services). Participants should assume that any such aid is prohibited unless they are specifically advised otherwise by the instructor or invigilator.

3. Improper Access and Obstruction

(a) Preventing Access to Materials

It is academic misconduct to alter, destroy, hide, remove without authorization, or in any other way improperly restrict access to library, electronic or other materials intended for general academic use.

(b) Obstruction and Interference

It is academic misconduct to obstruct or otherwise interfere with the activities of another, or to alter or falsify the work of others, in order to gain unfair academic advantage. This includes, but is not limited to, deleting data or files, interfering or tampering with experimental data, with a human or animal subject, with a written or other creation (for example, a painting, a sculpture, a film), with a chemical used for research, or with any other object of study or research device.

(c) Improper Access

It is academic misconduct to improperly obtain through theft, bribery, collusion, or otherwise access to confidential information, examinations or test questions or to gain undue academic advantage as a result of such behaviour.

(d) Improper Dissemination

It is academic misconduct to publish, disseminate or otherwise make public to a third party without prior written consent, confidential information. Confidential information includes but is not limited to academic information, data or documents which are not otherwise publicly available and which have been gathered or held with a reasonable expectation of confidentiality.

4. Aiding and Abetting

Knowingly aiding or abetting anyone engaging in any form of academic misconduct is itself academic misconduct and subject to this policy.

Detection and Documentation

1. Examinations

The responsibility for preventing and detecting academic misconduct in an examination lies with the invigilators. In an effort to minimize the threat of academic misconduct, invigilators will take the following steps:

- Have Participants place any personal belongings (e.g. bags, books, knapsacks) or other items not classified as permissible aids in areas designated by the invigilator.
- If a calculator is an allowable aid, it must function solely as a calculator. Cell phones, PDAs and Pocket PCs are not allowable aids.
- Participants who leave the examination area for any reason including lavatory breaks, will be asked to turn in their exam and will not be permitted to return and resume their examination. Lavatory requirements should be met before the examination period begins. The invigilator

cannot leave the examination room to accompany a Participant to the lavatory.

- Participants will be given assigned seats for the purposes of writing the exam and will not be permitted to choose their own seats.

In cases of suspected academic misconduct, the invigilator shall allow the Participant to complete the examination, but:

- may require that the Participant complete the examination in another location or setting when it is deemed that such action will cause the least disruption of those taking the examination; and
- shall confiscate any suspect material including those portions of the examination completed to that point.

2. Assignments

The initial responsibility for detecting academic misconduct on assignments lies with the person(s) responsible for evaluation and discussion of the Participant's work, although that person may make use of reports from others to assist in detection, and may make use of electronic means of detection appropriate to the discipline. Where academic misconduct is suspected, the evaluator/marker shall retain possession of any suspect material and give a full report. At this stage, the Participant will be informed by the instructor that a suspicion of academic misconduct is being investigated.

3. Cases outside the domain of examinations or assignments

The responsibility for detecting academic misconduct in the context of an academic environment that is not part of the formal examination or assignment process rests with the entire VSTEP community. Where academic misconduct is suspected, but where it is unclear whether it is directly related to a specific module, those with knowledge of its occurrence should contact the Program Manager.

Penalty

VSTEP takes a serious view of academic misconduct. The first instance of academic misconduct will be documented and a warning will be given to the Participant. Any subsequent instance of academic misconduct of any form will result in the Participant's ineligibility to receive a VSTEP certificate.

Participants have the responsibility of abiding by VSTEP's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study and should contribute to supporting an environment that discourages misconduct.

VSTEP reserves the right to share any information in respect of a Participant's academic misconduct with the College of Veterinarians of Ontario.

Participant Dispute Resolution Policy

Policy

Participants should first try to resolve issues informally. If a more formal approach becomes necessary, VSTEP provides a fair and reasonable mechanism for resolution.

Procedure

1. Participants will first try to resolve the issue(s) directly with the other concerned party.
2. In the event that step 1 proves unsuccessful at resolving the dispute, the parties concerned will be invited to bring forward their positions in writing to the VSTEP Program Manager. Where appropriate the VSTEP Program Manager will interview all parties involved either in person or by teleconference in an effort to clarify the issues and obtain further information and seek a satisfactory resolution. The Program Manager will issue a decision either verbally or in writing as requested by the parties within 30 days of receipt of the written submissions.

Appeals

Either participant has the right to appeal the Program Manager's decision by submitting in writing their request for appeal to the VSTEP Board of Directors within 14 days of receipt of the Program Manager's decision. The Board of Directors will respond within 30 days of receipt of the written request for appeal. The decision of the Board of Directors is binding and the final stage in the process.

Mid Terms and Final Examinations

Mid Term tests and quizzes are used to provide feedback to Participants as to their academic progress to date. Mid Term test results will be shared with Participants and corrected answers provided. Mid Term tests and quizzes are considered an opportunity for continued Participant learning.

Final Examinations are used to assess the Participant's mastery of the subject material and do not constitute a learning opportunity.

Final examinations and final assignments will not be returned to Participants. These documents will be retained by VSTEP for a minimum of two years following the date of the examination or due date of the assignment after which they will be shredded.

Surgical Assessment

VSTEP Participants are provided opportunities during the session to perform surgery on live animals under the immediate supervision of another licensed veterinarian. The privilege to do so is granted under the authority of the restricted licence issued by the College of Veterinarians of Ontario. The animals on which VSTEP Participants will be performing surgery belong to the public and it is expected that all precautions will be observed in order to ensure a successful surgery, the animal's safe return and a full recovery.

VSTEP Participants will be provided with instruction in surgical techniques (tissue and instrument handling), surgical anatomy, and principles of wound healing before being offered any opportunity to perform live animal surgery. VSTEP Participants will then be expected to demonstrate sufficient mastery of such techniques in advance of the live animal surgery laboratory by way of an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). Participants who fail to achieve a passing grade in the OSCE will not be permitted to perform live animal surgery. Participants who fail to perform live animal surgery will not pass the surgery module.

Failed Modules

In order to receive a VSTEP certificate, Participants must pass each module and all field placements. Failure to receive a VSTEP certificate does not prevent any Participant from taking further examinations in relation to obtaining their general licence. However, the College of Veterinarians of Ontario will not grant a restricted licence to VSTEP Participants without a certificate.

Therefore, the Program Manager may, if appropriate and feasible, and only under special circumstances, allow a Participant the opportunity to take a supplemental examination or

assessment. These circumstances include at a minimum that the Participant has failed no more than one module and that the final grade in that failed module is not less than 45%. Participants should be aware that the passing grade for all modules is 50%. The decision to grant the privilege of sitting a supplemental exam will normally be made in consultation with the instructor and consideration of the Participant's performance in all areas of the program.

Grade Assessment

Grade assessment is the process of calculating grades, or the methods and criteria used to establish grades for a Participant in a module. VSTEP grades are of no consequence other than determination of pass/fail status. All modules carry a passing grade of 50%.

Except where the Participant has failed a module VSTEP reserves the right to assign only a pass/fail status and their ranking in the cohort rather than the Participant's final grade.

Withdrawal

This section provides a summary of policies and procedures with respect to Participants choosing to withdraw from VSTEP.

Participants who complete the procedure for registration and who subsequently decide at some point in the program not to complete it must notify the Program Manager who will determine the appropriate refund of fees paid, if any. Any required minimum registration deposit will automatically be forfeited.

Readmission Following Withdrawal

Participants who withdraw from VSTEP may choose to seek readmission in a subsequent session of the program, but readmission is not automatic.

Participants considering readmission should consult with the Program Manager regarding procedures and criteria for readmission.

Refunds Following Withdrawal

A Participant who makes a request for withdrawal from the VSTEP may request a refund of tuition fees. The effective date for the refund will be the date on which the Participant notifies the Program Manager regarding the withdrawal. If the withdrawal results in a credit balance a refund cheque is produced.

Refunds of fees will be calculated according to the effective date and the following schedule, where "T" equals the program start date.

Session Dates	Refund Rate
"T" minus 7 days	100%
"T" minus 6 days - "T" plus 1 day	75%
"T" plus 2 days - "T" plus 9 days	25%
After "T" plus 10 days	No refund

Any compulsory non-refundable Security Deposit is forfeited as the first charge against a withdrawal from the program including the first five class days. The above schedule will only come into effect after accounting for the loss of the security deposit.