

Vet School Application Terms & Acronyms

This document covers the must-know terminology related to applying to veterinary schools, including application platforms, exams, document types, and post-acceptance concepts. It's designed to help prospective vet students navigate the admissions process with confidence.

Application Platforms & Organizations

VMCAS – Veterinary Medical College Application Service

A centralized application service used by most U.S. and Canadian veterinary schools to process applications.

→ <https://www.aavmc.org/vmcas/>

AAVMC – Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges

The organization that manages VMCAS and sets guidelines for veterinary school admissions.

AVMA – American Veterinary Medical Association

Accredits veterinary schools and provides resources for veterinary professionals.

→ <https://www.avma.org/>

VMSAR – Veterinary Medical School Admission Requirements

An online directory that provides program-specific admissions details for vet schools participating in VMCAS.

→ <https://applytovetschool.org/>

Exams & Prerequisites

GRE – Graduate Record Examination

Formerly required by many vet schools. As of recent years, several schools have made it optional or removed the requirement altogether.

CASPer – Computer-Based Assessment for Sampling Personal Characteristics

An online situational judgment test that some vet schools use to assess interpersonal and ethical reasoning skills.

Pre-Reqs – Prerequisite Courses

Core undergraduate courses required for admission (e.g., biology, chemistry, physics, animal science). Requirements vary by school.

Shadowing Hours

Documented hours spent observing veterinarians in clinical settings. Often required by schools to demonstrate relevant experience.

Application Materials

LORs – Letters of Recommendation

Also known as Evaluations in VMCAS. Typically written by professors, veterinarians, or supervisors. Most schools require three.

Evaluator Portal

The secure online platform where recommenders upload letters directly to VMCAS. Applicants waive their right to view these letters.

PS – Personal Statement

An essay included in the VMCAS application explaining your motivation for becoming a veterinarian. Limited to 3,000 characters.

Experience Categories (VMCAS-specific):

- **Veterinary Experience** – Work under the supervision of a veterinarian.
 - **Animal Experience** – Non-veterinary animal-related work (e.g., shelter, farm, pet care).
 - **Research Experience** – Scientific or lab-based experience, often preferred by research-focused schools.
 - **Leadership & Community** – Clubs, outreach, volunteer work showing initiative and service.
 - **Employment & Honors** – Non-vet jobs, scholarships, awards.
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Application Cycle & Transcript Terms

Rolling Admissions

Some schools review applications as they are received rather than after the deadline. Applying early may improve acceptance chances.

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Application Cycle

The annual timeline for veterinary school applications. VMCAS typically opens in May and closes in mid-September.

Transcript Entry / Verification

Applicants manually input coursework and grades into VMCAS, which then verifies the data against official transcripts.

CVMGPA – Coursework & Veterinary Medicine GPA

Calculated by VMCAS, this includes science GPA, last 45-credit GPA, and cumulative GPA categories used by admissions committees.

Residency & School Status

IS / OOS – In-State / Out-of-State

These labels show whether you're a resident of the state where the vet school is located.

In-state students usually pay lower tuition and may have a better chance of getting in.

Some states without a vet school have agreements (called “contract programs”) that let their residents apply to certain out-of-state schools as if they were in-state.

Degrees & Credentialing

DVM – Doctor of Veterinary Medicine

The degree awarded upon graduation from a veterinary program in the U.S. and Canada.

VMD – Veterinariae Medicinae Doctoris

The equivalent of the DVM, awarded exclusively by the University of Pennsylvania.

NAVLE – North American Veterinary Licensing Examination

A required exam for licensure in the U.S. and Canada, typically taken during the final year of veterinary school.

→ <https://www.icva.net/navle/>

PAVE – Program for the Assessment of Veterinary Education Equivalence

A credentialing program for foreign-trained veterinarians seeking licensure in North America.

→ <https://www.aavsb.org/licensure-assistance/pave/>

Interview Formats & Evaluation

MMI – Multiple Mini Interviews

A series of short, structured interviews that assess qualities such as communication, problem-solving, and ethical decision-making.

Traditional Panel Interview

An interview format where one or more faculty or admissions officers ask questions in a sit-down format.

Behavioral Interview Questions

These questions ask applicants to describe how they've handled specific types of situations in the past, often using the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result).

SJT – Situational Judgment Test

An assessment presenting hypothetical scenarios to evaluate how an applicant would ethically and logically respond.

CASPer

Often categorized as an SJT, CASPer is used to evaluate non-cognitive skills such as empathy, professionalism, and ethics.

→ <https://acuityinsights.app/casper/>

Post-Acceptance Terms

Matriculation

The official enrollment process in a veterinary program after an offer of admission is accepted.

Orientation

An introductory period designed to familiarize students with veterinary school life, curriculum, policies, and campus resources.

White Coat Ceremony

A milestone event that symbolizes the beginning of a veterinary student's clinical education.

Didactic Years

The early years of veterinary school focused on classroom instruction, labs, and preclinical learning.

Clinical Rotations

Hands-on clinical experiences typically completed in the final year(s) of veterinary school across various specialties.

Financial Aid & Scholarships

FAFSA – Free Application for Federal Student Aid

A required form for accessing federal student aid in the U.S., including loans and some scholarships.

→ <https://studentaid.gov/>

Scholarships & Grants

Merit- or need-based awards that do not require repayment. Offered by schools, private organizations, and government programs.

Loan Repayment Programs

Programs like the **Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP)** help veterinarians repay student debt in exchange for service in high-need areas.

→ <https://nifa.usda.gov/program/veterinary-medicine-loan-repayment-program>

Diversity & Holistic Review Terms

First-Generation Applicant

A student whose parents did not earn a four-year college degree. Many vet schools recognize and support first-gen applicants.

Holistic Review

An admissions approach that considers academic achievement, experiences, personal background, and potential—not just GPA and test scores.