

DkIT Level 7 B.Sc. in Veterinary Nursing FAQs



Course information video: <https://youtu.be/6xxF2x0Q6Js>

Student work placement experience video: <https://youtu.be/rzbgJaU24IM>

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1. How many places are available on the DkIT veterinary nursing course?

30 in total: the typical breakdown is 20 Leaving Certificate students, six mature students and four for applicants with a QQI (formerly FETAC) Level 5 Animal Care course (course code 5M2768).

2. How do I apply?

All applicants (Leaving Certificate, mature and QQI) must apply to the CAO by 1st February, for entry the following September.

3. What are the minimum entry criteria for Leaving Certificate students?

You must have six grades at O6 (40-50%) or H7 (30-40%), including Mathematics and English or Irish. You must also have at least one H5 (50-60%) or better, or 200 points.

For veterinary nursing entry you must also have a H5 (50-60%) in Higher Level 'Biology' or 'Agricultural Science'. This corresponds to a Higher Level C3 in the Leaving Certificate prior to 2017. Once the minimum entry requirements have been achieved, selection is based on CAO points.

4. What CAO points are required for entry to the programme?

The CAO points required depend on the demand for places and so they vary each year. It is impossible to determine in advance what the final CAO points will be but as a rough guide they are typically in the range of 380-430 points.

You can check previous points requirements on the CAO website (www.cao.ie) or in the DkIT handbook, available from <https://www.dkit.ie/>

5. Why is there a requirement for higher level biology or agricultural science for Leaving Certificate applicants?

This is due to the high scientific content on the programme, particularly in the first year. The coursework is intensive as students also spend extensive periods on work placement.

6. What are the criteria for mature applicants?

You must be over 23 years of age by 1st January in the year you are applying. You must apply to the CAO and submit all requested documentation to them.

Applications are assessed by DkIT and shortlisted candidates may be invited for interview.

There are no specific academic requirements for mature applicants but a number of criteria are used for selection; including academic background, **relevant work experience** and familiarity with the course and the profession. Evidence of the ability to successfully complete a course is beneficial.

Relevant animal experience and exposure to the veterinary practice work place are key requirements that are taken into account when assessing applications.

Prospective candidates are **strongly** advised to demonstrate that they have spent a significant period of time in a veterinary practice, ideally with registered veterinary nurses, in order to obtain an insight into the realities of the career. Supporting documents e.g. references **must** be included with the application. Unsubstantiated claims will not be taken into consideration.

Due to the popularity of the course, the demand for mature applicant places is **extremely** high. This results in stiff competition for places, as unfortunately we are unable to accommodate all applicants.

7. How should a veterinary practice reference for a mature applicant be submitted?

All veterinary practice experience should be verified by the inclusion of a written reference letter in the original application. **References should be dated and signed by a registered veterinary nurse or veterinary practitioner, and ideally either printed on headed paper and/or bear a practice stamp.** A written reference should include information about the time/dates of experience and a summary of the applicant's performance in the workplace.

Please note that screenshots or cropped/low resolution photographs of documents may not be verifiable. We recommend that you submit a high resolution PDF copy of

the original document(s) in your application. The free Microsoft Lens app or similar may be used to generate a softcopy of an original printed document using a smartphone. Due to the high number of applications it is not possible for referees to be contacted via telephone – please include the written references in the application submitted to the CAO.

8. Are online training courses helpful for mature applicants?

Short online courses may include some useful/relevant theoretical content e.g. first aid, animal behaviour etc. Due to the lack of practical experience and/or opportunity to handle animals in an online course, their usefulness may be limited. **We do not recommend that applicants complete online courses which charge significant fees, as the benefit is likely to be minimal.** Completing a QQI Level 5 Animal Care course is likely to be a much better use of time and resources, as it will include practical training opportunities and can also count as an alternative entry route (see below).

9. What are the criteria for QQI applicants?

You must be a graduate of the Level 5 'Animal Care' programme (5M2768) and achieve a minimum of a distinction in the modules 'Biology' and 'Animal Anatomy and Physiology'.

Due to the high demand for places currently, the successful QQI applicants have achieved distinctions in **all** eight of their modules and random selection is applied by the CAO to allocate the available places.

10. Can I apply for a place on the course with a QQI Level 6 in Animal Care?

While a Level 6 award may offer further opportunity for practical training and experience, DkIT do not use these awards as a QQI entry route. This is to avoid placing extra restrictions on the pool of potential QQI applicants.

11. Can I apply to enter second year with a QQI level 6 animal care qualification?

Due to the very specific veterinary nursing content of all the modules, the only QQI application route is the Level 5 Animal Care for entry into first year of the veterinary nursing course.

12. Where can I find more information about applying for a place?

Contact the CAO or the DkIT Admissions office (email admissions@dkit.ie). Further information is also available on the DkIT website (www.dkit.ie) and the college's social media channels.

13. What if I live in Northern Ireland?

Applicants from Northern Ireland and the UK are welcome to apply. Please see this link for additional information: <https://www.dkit.ie/academic-administration/first-year-admissions/non-standard-applicants/northern-irelanduk-applicants> or contact the DkIT Admissions Office (email admissions@dkit.ie).

14. Can residents of Northern Ireland complete their work placement there?

This is possible for some of your placement but restrictions are applied by the UK veterinary regulator – the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS). It is probable that residents of Northern Ireland will have to complete a significant proportion of their placement in the Republic of Ireland.

15. Can I work in the UK?

Irish veterinary nursing qualifications are recognised by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), which is the governing body for the UK veterinary profession. Graduates of the DkIT veterinary nursing course can register with the RCVS in order to work as a veterinary nurse in the UK.

16. Is it a full-time programme?

Yes, very much so. You must be available from 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday for classes and you will also have assignments to complete as well as study commitments. There are also extended periods of work placement for which you must be available on a fulltime basis.

17. Why are there science subjects in the course?

Veterinary nurses are responsible for the administration, monitoring and recording of much of the medicines, anaesthetics and treatments administered to the patients under their care. They must understand how these will affect the animal's cells and organs in order to monitor their effectiveness and detect any deterioration in the patient's condition immediately. A thorough grounding in the medical and life sciences is therefore an essential component of optimal nursing care.

18. Do you have open days?

Yes, the DkIT campus open day for potential applicants takes place each Autumn. Details are available on the DkIT website beforehand. Schools and QQI colleges are also informed. Online digital open days are also held throughout the year. See <https://www.dkit.ie/study/visit-us/opendays/> for more information.

19. Is the course available on a part-time basis?

At the moment the course is only available on a full-time or access basis (this is due to the high number of practical classes involved). Access means that you can do a small number of modules at a time and spread the course over a longer period. However, you would be doing these modules with the full-time students and would need to be available at the scheduled times.

20. Which animal species does the course cover?

The course focuses on the domestic animals you are likely to encounter in Irish veterinary practices. The emphasis is on dogs, cats, horses and farm animals. However, rabbits, guinea pigs, birds, reptiles and other exotics are also covered. The Veterinary Council of Ireland requires graduates to be competent in the care of a range of species, not just one or two.

21. What subjects will I study?

The list of modules is available on the [BSc in Veterinary Nursing webpage](https://www.dkit.ie/courses/school-of-health-and-science/agriculture-food-and-animal-health/bsc-in-veterinary-nursing.html):
<https://www.dkit.ie/courses/school-of-health-and-science/agriculture-food-and-animal-health/bsc-in-veterinary-nursing.html>

A more detailed breakdown is available [here](#):

<https://courses.dkit.ie/index.cfm/page/course/courseId/1388>

22. I love working with animals but I don't enjoy studying; is this the course for me?

Possibly not – veterinary nurses have a very responsible and skilful job that requires a high degree of specialist knowledge.

23. Are there work placements in the course?

Yes, one in each year (8 weeks each in 1st and 2nd year and 12 weeks in the summer of 3rd year). The Institute Work Placement Office will help and advise students when obtaining a placement practice, but the responsibility to source the placement ultimately lies with the student. Placement practices must be registered as a veterinary clinic or hospital under the VCI Premises Accreditation Scheme (PAS), see <http://www.vci.ie/PAS> for more details.

Click [here](#) or visit

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=156&v=rzbgJaU24IM&feature=emb_logo to see a video of one of our students talking about her work placement experiences.

24. I have never worked in a veterinary practice before, will this matter?

The course is designed to give students a complete introduction to the veterinary workplace. However, it is **strongly** recommended that every student who is considering veterinary nursing as a career spends some time in one or more practices, alongside registered veterinary nurses, before they apply. This will give you a valuable insight into the profession and help you decide if it really is the career for you.

25. What does a typical veterinary nursing job entail?

Everyone who works in a veterinary practice will tell you that there is no such thing as a “typical” day! The role of the veterinary nurse is challenging and varied.

The job involves a wide range of skills: including (but not limited to) caring for hospitalised animals, assisting with surgery and anaesthesia, taking and developing x-rays, wound management and bandaging, collecting and processing blood samples and other diagnostic tests, advising clients, cleaning and disinfection of premises and equipment, reception duties and working as part of a highly skilled veterinary team in the assessment and treatment of patients.

As well as caring for animals, a veterinary practice must also be a viable business. Throughout the course there is a strong emphasis on excellent customer service, interpersonal skills and team work. Successful veterinary nurses must enjoy working with colleagues and clients, as well as the challenge of caring for animals.

26. What other careers can veterinary nursing graduates enter?

Veterinary nurses also work as sales representatives for animal nutrition and healthcare companies, in the charitable sector, animal insurance, veterinary supply companies, as animal therapists, practice managers, and a wide variety of other jobs in the pet or animal care and production animal/agri-food sectors.

Veterinary nurses are also eligible to apply for Technical Agricultural Officer posts with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

27. What's the difference between level 7 and 8 courses?

A level 7 course is a three-year ordinary level degree. A level 8 course is a four-year honours level degree. The BSc in Veterinary Nursing at DkIT is a level 7 course. DkIT also offers a one year full time or two year part time Level 8 BSc (Hons) in Advanced Veterinary Nursing. See the [course page](https://www.dkit.ie/courses/school-of-health-and-science/agriculture-food-and-animal-health/bsc-(hons)-in-advanced-veterinary-nursing-add-on.html) for more information:
[https://www.dkit.ie/courses/school-of-health-and-science/agriculture-food-and-animal-health/bsc-\(hons\)-in-advanced-veterinary-nursing-add-on.html](https://www.dkit.ie/courses/school-of-health-and-science/agriculture-food-and-animal-health/bsc-(hons)-in-advanced-veterinary-nursing-add-on.html)

28. Can I go on to study veterinary medicine from this course?

The veterinary nursing course does not have any links to veterinary medicine. If you are interested in becoming a vet you should contact the faculty of veterinary medicine at UCD, or alternate providers overseas.

29. Can I enter the four-year veterinary medicine graduate degree if I achieve a level eight degree in veterinary nursing?

The veterinary medicine graduate entry programme is very intensive and candidates need to be extremely proficient in the basic sciences e.g. chemistry, anatomy, physiology and biochemistry. Veterinary nursing degrees are practical in nature and do not focus on the pure sciences. Therefore they are unlikely to meet entry criteria for what is a highly competitive entry route into veterinary medicine. **If you wish to become a vet we do not recommend that you study veterinary nursing as an alternative.**

30. I have never worked with farm animals or horses before, will this matter?

The broader your animal handling experience, the easier you will find this aspect of the course. However, you will have farm animal practical classes at Ballyhaise Agricultural College. This is a residential week's experience in March of first year. Students will have the opportunity to get hands on experience with farm animals. Accommodation costs are in the region of €60 for the week. Further details will be provided during first year induction week. Lambing in particular is an aspect of this week that students find highly enjoyable and educational.

Second year students spend a week having practical horse care classes at a local equestrian centre in early December. Students will be brought by bus to and from the centre from the DkIT campus daily.

You will also be required to gain some experience in a large animal veterinary practice during your work placements. We recommend that students schedule this for the 2nd year placement as it takes place in the Spring, when large animal work is at its peak and there is plenty of opportunity to get involved.

31. I have never worked with animals, other than my own pets at home. Will this matter?

We **strongly recommend** that everyone who applies for this course spends some time experiencing the realities of working with animals. It is often very different (and

a lot harder!) than people expect. If you like it, it is really rewarding: but you must be prepared to work extremely hard: both physically and mentally.

32. I have spent time volunteering with animal welfare organisations, will this help?

This type of work may give you valuable animal handling experience. However, the reality is that veterinary practices are businesses, not voluntary welfare organisations or charities. Therefore, they have a different ethos.

We recommend that you gain some veterinary practice experience, so that you can experience this for yourself and decide if it is a difference you are comfortable with.

33. Does the veterinary nursing course include much wildlife care?

No – the primary focus is on domestic animals, as these constitute the vast majority of patients treated by Irish veterinary practices. If you wish to specialise in wildlife care or rescue this may not be the course for you.

34. I want to be an equine veterinary nurse, do I need to do a specialist training course?

No - all the Irish accredited veterinary nursing programmes are required by the VCI to train students to care for a range of small and large domestic animal species, including horses. Once registered, you can pursue a career within whatever branch of the profession you wish, including specialist equine hospitals. There is currently a shortage of equine veterinary nurses so employment prospects are good.

35. I have a learning difficulty, disability or ongoing medical condition. How might this affect my training?

DkIT have a disability and student quality office to assist students in achieving their potential during their studies. Examples of supports include extra time in final examinations or the use of a laptop, reader or scribe. Each case is different so students need to meet with the disability and student support office staff to arrange a personalised support programme.

Please bear in mind that these supports will not be available during work placement and registered veterinary nursing students must be able to independently complete their workplace and patient care duties.

It is also important to note that in order to register with the Veterinary Council of Ireland as a veterinary nurse **you must independently achieve the competencies needed to provide safe and effective animal care**. For example, it may be appropriate for a student to have a reader or scribe in a formal written examination but these may not be used in a practical assessment, such as when completing patient records or calculating drug dosages.

36. I have an allergy, will this affect me?

We do not recommend that you study veterinary nursing if you have a significant animal-related allergy, as both the course work and placement requires working in confined spaces with multiple dogs and cats, as well as horses.

37. Do I need any vaccinations?

We strongly recommend that all applicants check with their GP to ensure that they are adequately protected against tetanus.

38. Who is responsible for the regulation of the Irish veterinary nursing profession?

This is the role of the Veterinary Council of Ireland (VCI). They accredit the veterinary nursing education providers in Ireland and maintain the register of veterinary nurses. See www.vci.ie

39. Is the DkIT programme accredited?

Yes, DkIT have received full accreditation from the Veterinary Council of Ireland. Our graduates can register with the VCI and work as veterinary nurses. It is also recognised in the UK by the RCVS and in the EU via ACOVENE.

40. I have received an offer for a veterinary nursing place. What should I do to prepare?

Experience in veterinary practice and with animal handling across a range of species will always be of value. Other things that would be helpful include getting physically fit. You don't have to be an elite athlete but nursing is a physically demanding job (especially with small animals as they require a lot of bending and lifting). Suggestions include yoga, Zumba, pilates, dance classes, running (Parkrun is a great start), horse riding, cycling or swimming. Pick something you enjoy!

The other recommendation is to attend as many events involving animals as possible. Suggestions include (but are not limited to): agricultural shows, horse racing and equestrian events, cattle marts, pet shows, the Irish National Stud, the National Ploughing Championships, Teagasc open days, volunteering, pet farms, trekking etc. Being informed about animal events and industries will give you real-life experience to build your college learning on.

41. What other colleges offer veterinary nursing courses?

There are currently five Irish courses that have been accredited by the VCI and whose graduates can work as veterinary nurses. They are offered by UCD (4 year level 8), Dundalk Institute of Technology, Technical University of the Shannon (TUS), Atlantic Technical University (ATU) (all 3 year level 7 degrees) and Cork College of Further Education (2 year level 6 diploma).

Munster Technical University (MTU) started a veterinary nursing programme in September 2023. The University of Ulster is also developing a new programme. For further information on these courses please contact the relevant college.

42. I have a Level 6 qualification in veterinary nursing, can I obtain a Level 7 award from DkIT?

As you are already entitled to register as a veterinary nurse you are not eligible for a place on the Level 7 programme. You may however apply for a place on the Level 8 in Advanced Veterinary Nursing, as long as you have 2+ years of clinical experience in practise. Please see the [Level 8 course page](#) and FAQs for more information.

43. Where else can I find information about the Irish veterinary nursing profession?

You can also contact the Veterinary Council of Ireland (www.vci.ie) and the Irish Veterinary Nursing Association (www.ivna.ie).

44. What are the challenges associated with being a veterinary nurse?

While a career working with animals can be highly rewarding, it is important to acknowledge that a career in veterinary nursing can be **extremely challenging** at times. Not all patients are friendly and pleasant to handle, and a minority of clients may be demanding, rude or unreasonable. The role of a veterinary nurse includes assisting with difficult patient care decisions and euthanasia. An animal's economic value or an owner's lack of resources may impact patient outcomes. The demands of an often extremely busy and hectic workplace can result in compassion fatigue and burnout amongst veterinary staff.

A veterinary career can be very fulfilling, but it is important to acknowledge the challenges faced by veterinary professionals from the outset and make sure you have considered these. A few days spent shadowing a veterinary nurse and informing yourself about the realities of the role may be very valuable: we recommend that everyone who is considering applying for veterinary nursing finds out as much as they can about the career to enable you to make well informed decisions.

45. I'm an EU citizen, can I apply for a place on the veterinary nursing programme at Dkit?

Yes, applications should be made via the CAO. Please also refer to:

<https://www.dkit.ie/admissions/how-to-apply/undergraduate-entry-routes/eu-applicants.html>

Please note that you are likely to be required to complete all your work placement in an Irish veterinary practice, as veterinary nursing is not a recognised and regulated profession in all EU countries.

46. Can I apply for a place on the veterinary nursing programme at DkIT as an International student?

Veterinary nurses from outside the EU are not currently eligible for a visa to enable them to work in Ireland. For this reason, we are not in a position to offer places on the veterinary nursing programme to international applicants.

47. I would like to gain some experience in a veterinary practice but I am having trouble finding a place.

We find that it's not uncommon for people to report this difficulty, but it turns out that they have often just emailed a practice. Veterinary practices are typically small and extremely busy independent businesses where the administrative staff just do not have time to prioritise and follow up with multiple email enquiries. Most veterinary practices are inundated with requests for work experience, so you do need to demonstrate your commitment and motivation to stand out.

We strongly recommend that if you'd like to gain some experience in a veterinary practice, you should **turn up in person**, with a copy of your CV and a well written cover letter. You may then politely explain your interest in pursuing a career in this area and your wish to obtain some first-hand experience to help you make an informed decision. This approach is far more likely to be successful, as the practice staff can see that you are genuinely interested in the career.

48. What equipment will I need?

The following list is typical but not exhaustive:

- A stethoscope
- 2-3 sets of scrubs (top and trousers)
- A fob watch
- A digital clinical thermometer
- A laboratory coat (Howie style)
- Laboratory safety glasses
- Wellington boots with toe protection

- Overalls
- Waterproofs (jacket and trousers)

49. Can I apply via the disability access route to education (DARE) scheme?

DkIT does accept DARE applications. Please be aware that veterinary nursing has a Fitness to Practice requirement and students must be able to independently provide safe and effective patient care.

For more details please refer to [DARE Applicants: Information on how to apply for students with as disability / Undergraduate \(CAO\) Entry Routes / How To Apply / DkIT - Dundalk Institute of Technology](#)

50. Can I apply via the higher education access route (HEAR) scheme?

DkIT does accept HEAR applications. For more details please refer to [HEAR Applicants: Information on how students from socio-economic and disadvantaged groups can apply to DkIT \(HEAR\) / Undergraduate \(CAO\) Entry Routes / How To Apply / DkIT - Dundalk Institute of Technology](#)

51. The Abivet Rome Online Veterinary Technician Programme

Anyone who is interested in becoming a registered veterinary nurse should be aware that the Abivet Rome Online Veterinary Technician programme is **not** recognised by the Veterinary Council of Ireland, and completion of it will not enable a person to register and legally work as a veterinary nurse in Ireland. For more details please refer to the [VCI's position statement](#) on this programme:
<https://www.vci.ie/news/veterinary-council-of-ireland-position-on-the-abivet-rome-online-veterinary-technician-programme>

52. Are there clothing and dress requirements for veterinary nurses?

Veterinary nursing clothing and uniforms are designed to aid effective infection control and biosecurity practices, as well as facilitating comfort and mobility when

working with and handling a wide range of domestic animal species (both companion and production animals e.g. pets, farm animals and horses).

While in college students are required to use scrub suits (short-sleeved top and trousers), a Hoey-style laboratory coat and overalls, wellington or yard boots and a waterproof jacket and trousers for a range of practical classes, assessments and field trips. Employers and work placement supervisors may require you to wear/use additional protective clothing and equipment, depending on the specific task being performed and the type of patient(s) and pathogen(s) you are dealing with.

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