

Texas A&M Externship Guidelines

One of the requirements for all fourth-year veterinary students in the professional veterinary curriculum at Texas A&M University, College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) is a 4-week clinical externship. Students in the fourth-year of the professional veterinary curriculum may select a 4-week off-campus educational experience from a variety of different opportunities.

The externship rotation is designed to allow the student, under direct supervision, to practice the problem-solving, technical and communication skills that they have acquired up to that time during their clinical rotations in the Veterinary Teaching Hospital. The goal of the externship (specifically the private practice externship) is to familiarize the student with the practice of veterinary medicine in the private sector, to provide valuable exposure to primary care medical and surgical services, client communications and practice management. The exact structure of the externship and the responsibilities of the student are arranged on an individual basis between the veterinarian and student. Because the student receives academic credit towards his/her degree, the CVM considers veterinarians who participate in the program to be part of our educational team, and expects them to provide instruction, mentoring and evaluation of the students visiting their practices. At the end of the externship, the practitioner is required to provide a written evaluation of the student's performance. Grading forms will be provided to facilitate that process.

Under our curricular guidelines, the students are expected to be enthusiastic and effective participants in the patient care activities of the practice, upholding the professional and ethical standards expected by the CVM and the practice.

Students may perform any veterinary task you and they are comfortable with but they must work under direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian. The Veterinary Licensing Act, Article 801.004, (Exceptions) (5) states that the provisions of this Act shall **not** apply to:

Acts performed by persons who are full-time students of an accredited college of veterinary medicine, or who are foreign veterinary graduates of a Board approved equivalent competency program for foreign veterinary graduates and who are participating in an extern or preceptor program approved by the Board if the acts are performed under direct supervision of a licensee employing the person.

Direct supervision is defined in Part II, Chapter 573 Rules of Professional Conduct, 573.10(b):
Direct Supervision shall mean the supervision of those tasks or procedures that do not require the presence of a veterinarian in the room where performed, but require the presence of a licensee on the premises and availability for prompt consultation and treatment.

For students and practitioners participating in an externship, it is suggested that both parties review the *Veterinary Practice Act* and *Rules of Professional Conduct* for Texas, or for the state in which the experience occurs. These should be followed carefully in order to protect both parties involved.

Any financial arrangements should be negotiated between student and veterinarian prior to the start of the externship. The College has no official position on this matter, but encourages that consideration be given to help the student with living expenses. Most students are in need of financial assistance as they near the end of their professional education.

Upon receipt of a completed evaluation form, we are prepared to offer, through the Texas A&M University Office of Continuing Education, five (5) clock hours of continuing education credit. In a multi-person practice we can only give these credits to one person and a practitioner is only eligible for five units of CE credit in this fashion during any calendar year. There is a \$20.00 charge for the certificate.

As indicated, there are many externship opportunities available and the CVM makes no effort to approve externships or to direct students to particular externships. We are primarily a clearing house for information and a coordinator, insuring compliance with the guidelines necessary to be able to appropriately provide academic credit for the externship experience.

There are basically three things you can do to make your externship attractive to our students:

1. Plan a well structured, carefully mentored program. Allow supervised contacts with clients and allow the students significant decision making opportunities in case care issues. Spend time with the students discussing case material, practice management programs and client communications. Provide opportunities to practice technical and surgical skills without relegating the student to a technicians role or an animal caretaker role. Allow the student access to library materials and provide some opportunity for reading and reflection on the cases they have seen.
2. If possible, provide some stipend support for the student. This is certainly not a requirement, but most of our students carry significant financial burdens and some financial support to help them meet costs during the externship is very helpful. Stipends, if given, range from \$250 - \$500 per week.
3. If possible, provide some housing arrangements for the student. Most are very appreciative of any reasonable living arrangement.

Further guidelines for both the student and the veterinarian are as follows:

THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY

1. The duties of the student shall be set by the veterinarian with due consideration for the State Practice Act.
2. The student should at no time present himself/herself as a graduate, licensed veterinarian by use of the title of "Doctor" nor should he or she permit the practitioner to use this title when introducing the student.
3. The duty hours of the student shall be prearranged by mutual agreement between the student and veterinarian.
4. The student should maintain contact with patients and should perform routine hospital and laboratory work as needed. The student's experience should encompass all fields of professional activity in the practice or other type of externship.
5. The student should be an assistant to the professional staff and should not be assigned housekeeping duties beyond those normally performed by the veterinarian.
6. The student shall have no primary responsibility for patients, but only assigned duties under the supervision of the veterinarian or his associates.
7. The externship may be terminated by the student or the veterinarian in the event of a personality conflict, health or other personal or ethical circumstances, when the veterinarian and/or the student determine that the experience is not meeting its defined objectives. The Director for Student Services for the Professional Program should be contacted immediately if this situation arises.

THE VETERINARIAN'S RESPONSIBILITY

1. The veterinarian should outline to the student his/her proposed program of training.
2. The veterinarian shall arrange the work of the student in a manner that shall best fulfill the educational objectives of the program. He/She shall attempt to include all possible phases of the practice or other type of externship.
3. The veterinarian shall assume the responsibility of an instructor, educator or researcher.
4. The veterinarian should provide an example for, and demand of, the student, professional behavior, personal neatness, sanitation and proper care of equipment.
5. The veterinarian shall introduce the student as a 4th year student in the professional veterinary curriculum performing a required externship and should in no way imply that the student is a graduate and entitled to use the title "Doctor".
6. The veterinarian should provide the student time to ask questions and discuss the various activities of the externship experience.
7. The veterinarian will be asked by the College of Veterinary Medicine to complete a brief evaluation form of the activities and achievements accomplished during the externship period. The veterinarian will also be asked to discuss with the student his or her performance during and at the end of the externship and submit a pass or fail evaluation of the student's performance upon completion of the externship. The completed externship evaluation form should be sealed in the envelope provided and returned to the Office of the Director for Student Services for the Professional Program.