

Technical Standards for Admissions & Successful Progress in Veterinary Medical School

Introduction

The University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine (UTCVM) professional degree program requires the acquisition of a broad scope of knowledge in veterinary medicine, surgery, biomedical research, animal husbandry, animal production, animal behavior, and other basic skills required for clinical practice and the breadth of careers available in veterinary medicine. In addition, there is a requirement for good cognitive skills to allow successful academic progress, and both personal and professional skills attributes to ensure strong communication, teamwork, empathy, reliability, stress management, and emotional control.

The following abilities and characteristics are defined as technical standards, which, in conjunction with academic and professional standards established by the faculty, are requirements for admission, academic advancement, and graduation at the UTCVM.

Technical standards are designed to communicate the necessary intellectual and physical abilities, and behavioral and social attributes of all candidates and students; these standards are not intended to deter candidates for whom reasonable accommodation will allow successful completion of the curriculum. Students or candidates with questions regarding technical standards are encouraged to contact the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Students and candidates with questions about accommodations are encouraged to contact the office of University of Tennessee Student Disability Services to begin to identify needed accommodation to assure equal access to the program. Admission to the UTCVM is conditional on the candidate's having the ability to satisfy these technical standards, with or without reasonable accommodation.

The veterinary professional program includes rigorous academic training in semesters 1–5, requiring long hours in class, extensive after-class study, and intensive examination periods during midterm and final exam periods. Clinical training in semesters 6–9 requires long hours, limited breaks, and the physical agility and stamina needed to conduct diagnosis, treatment, and general husbandry of various animal species. Candidates and students must have the physical and emotional capacity to competently meet the demands of the hospital, classroom, and laboratory settings, including settings that may involve heavy workloads; long hours; fractious, frightened, or dangerous animals; and stressful situations.

Equal Access to the Educational Program

The University of Tennessee intends for its students and graduates to become competent and compassionate veterinarians who are capable of entering practice, advance training, or alternative careers as “practice ready.” All students are expected to meet requirements for state licensure and USDA accreditation.

The University of Tennessee and the College of Veterinary Medicine are committed to providing equal educational opportunities for qualified students with disabilities who are accepted into the veterinary medical professional degree program. The UTCVM has a strong commitment to state and federal laws and regulations (including the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990). Any individual with a disability who meets the academic and technical standards, with or without reasonable accommodations, is eligible to apply and be admitted to the UTCVM educational program. Students with disabilities are assisted, on an individual basis, in determining the availability of options or reasonable accommodations that would permit the student to satisfy these technical standards. An accommodation is not reasonable if it poses a direct threat to the health or safety of self and/or others, if it requires or results in a substantial modification to essential elements of the curriculum or causes a fundamental alteration of the program, if it lowers academic standards, or if it poses an undue burden on the college. Except in rare circumstances, the use of a third party (e.g., an intermediary) to perform any of the functions described in the Technical Standards would constitute an unacceptable modification. Intermediaries do not include note takers, those assisting with sign-language translation, animal holders, personal assistants, or other accommodation assistance, as long as those individuals do not perform the cognitive, professional, or technical skill required of student.

Process

Admission to the UTCVM is conditional and dependent on qualifying admission standards and the ability to satisfy the technical standards, with or without reasonable accommodations. Once admitted, continuation and advancement in the program requires full participation and completion of all core courses and clinical requirements as outlined in the student handbook for the veterinary medical professional program. In addition, students must adhere to the university Student Code of Conduct and Honor Code, and the UTCVM Principles of Professionalism.

Admitted candidates who have a disability and need accommodations should initiate discussions with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs or the Director of Student Services as soon as an offer of admission is accepted. They are the liaisons with [Student Disability Services \(SDS\)](#). It is the responsibility of a candidate with a disability to provide SDS current information documenting the general nature and extent of their disability and the functional limitations proposed to be accommodated. Student Disability Services will conduct the evaluation of the documentation and then determine accommodations in consultation with the UTCVM Associate Dean and faculty, as necessary. Evaluating and facilitating accommodation requests is a collaborative effort between the candidate, the UTCVM faculty, and SDS. The University of Tennessee reserves the right to request new or additional information, and requests for accommodations are renewed each semester.

Should a candidate have or develop a condition that would place patients, the student, or others at risk or that may affect their need for accommodation, an evaluation with the UTCVM administration and SDS may be necessary. As in initial assessments, a complete and careful reconsideration of all the skills, attitudes, and attributes of each candidate will be performed. This includes an assessment of their willingness, desire, and ability to complete the professional curriculum and fulfill all requirements for veterinary licensure. This decision will be informed by the knowledge that students with varied types of disabilities have the ability to become successful within the wide scope of veterinary careers. However, standards for graduate veterinarians and licensure include the full scope of medical and surgical practice treating all non-human species. As such, the professional curriculum must be completed with satisfactory performance in its entirety.

UTCVM Technical (Non-Academic) Standards

I. Observation: University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine (UTCVM) candidates and students must be able to observe demonstrations and animal behavior, as well as participate in teaching or clinical laboratory exercises, including but not limited to cadaver dissections, anatomy specimen examinations, pathology and clinical pathology laboratory sessions, animal handling classes, and microscopic study of microorganisms, parasites, and tissues in normal and pathologic states. Candidates must be able to accurately observe animal patients and assess findings together with a medical history, physical exam, and other diagnostic findings.

II. Communication: Candidates and students must be able to communicate accurately, effectively, and efficiently in English with animal owners or agents, classmates, and members of the healthcare team. They must be able to obtain a medical history in a timely fashion, interpret non-verbal aspects of communication, and establish doctor-client relationships with patients and their owners.

III. Motor Function: Candidates and students must possess the capacity to perform physical examinations, diagnostic maneuvers (e.g., blood draws, catheterization, and needle and syringe manipulation), instrument handling, suturing, and other surgical techniques, with or without accommodations. They must be able to respond to emergency situations in a timely manner and provide general and emergency care. They must be able to adhere to universal precaution measures and meet safety standards applicable to inpatient and outpatient settings and other clinical activities.

IV. Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative, and Quantitative Abilities: Candidates and students must have sufficient cognitive abilities and effective learning techniques to assimilate the detailed, voluminous, and complex information presented in the curriculum. They must be able to learn through a variety of modalities, including but not limited to classroom instruction; small group, team, and collaborative activities; individual study; preparation and presentation of reports; and use of simulations and computer technology, including virtual reality and augmented reality displays. Candidates must be able to memorize, measure, calculate, reason, analyze, synthesize, and transmit information across modalities. They must recognize and draw conclusions about three-dimensional spatial relationships and logical sequential relationships among events. They must be able to formulate and test hypotheses that enable effective and timely problem solving in diagnosis and treatment of patients in a variety of clinical modalities. They must be able to integrate observations with comprehensive history, physical exam and existing diagnostic findings to develop an appropriate diagnostic, treatment, and monitoring plan, as well as develop a reasonable prognosis for recovery or treatment success.

V. Behavioral and Social Attributes: Candidates and students must demonstrate the maturity and emotional stability required for full use of their intellectual abilities. They must accept responsibility for learning, exercising good judgment, and promptly completing all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients. Students must be able to work effectively, respectfully, and professionally as part of the veterinary healthcare team, and to interact with animal patients, clients or agents, healthcare personnel, and the academic community in a courteous, professional, and respectful manner. They must be able to tolerate physically demanding workloads and long work hours, including overnight shifts, and continue to function effectively under stress. They must display flexibility and adaptability to changing schedules and work environments (e.g. indoors, barns, field services) and extremes of warm and cold temperatures. They must be capable of regular, reliable, and punctual attendance at classes and clinical rotations. Laboratories and some classes have mandatory attendance. Students must be able to commit to content of mandatory attendance, with limited exceptions as defined by the excused leave policy or other university policies. Students must be able to contribute to collaborative, constructive learning environments; accept constructive

feedback as part of the training and assessment process; and take personal responsibility for learning and for addressing any needed improvements. Accommodations may be requested with regard to the standards set forth in behavior and social attributes; nevertheless, such attributes are the foundation of professionalism and must be met by each applicant, with or without reasonable accommodations.

VI. Ethical and Legal Standards: Candidates and students must understand the legal and ethical aspects of the practice of veterinary medicine and function within both the law and ethical standards of the profession. They must meet the legal standards to be licensed to practice veterinary medicine within the United States. As such, candidates for admission must acknowledge and provide written explanation of any felony offense or disciplinary action taken against them prior to matriculation in the UTCVM. In addition, should a student be convicted of any felony offense while in veterinary school, they agree to immediately notify the Academic Dean as to the nature of the conviction. Failure to disclose prior or new offenses can lead to disciplinary action by the University Student Conduct and Community Standards Committee or the UTCVM Academic Progress Committee; disciplinary action may include suspension or dismissal.

Approved by the UTCVM Curriculum, Assessment, and Executive Committees. Spring 2020.