

Veterinary Technology Program  
Distance-Blended Option

**APPLICANT OVERVIEW**



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## VETERINARY TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

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# Introduction



**Saskatchewan Polytechnic’s Veterinary Technology program is a 2-year diploma in Veterinary Technology that is accredited by the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA). In the Spring of 2021, funding was received from the Ministry of Advanced Education and the Ministry of Agriculture to expand our program with seats focusing on rural and mixed animal veterinary practice.**

Our program is comprised of 6 academic semesters spread out over 2 years. Both in-person and distance students enroll in the same courses. Courses include lectures, laboratories, tours of external facilities, and clinic experiential learning. During Year 1, there is an emphasis on building a general theoretical knowledge of animals, the veterinary industry and the health sciences. There is an emphasis on introductory clinical skills including animal handling and basic procedures such as measuring vitals, giving injections, sample collection, and radiology.

In Year 2, courses become more specific to veterinary science. Semester 4 courses include theoretical nutrition, animal diseases, anesthesia, pharmacology, clinical pathology, parasitology and surgical nursing. The majority of Semester 5 and 6 classes are based on experiential and clinical learning. Semester 5 includes 10 weeks of practicum learning and students can select their placements within the veterinary and related animal industry according to program guidelines. Semester 6 includes clinical learning at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM) emergency and referral teaching hospital.

## What is “distance-blended” learning? Our distance-blended program has three components:

A portion of learning takes place from your home via online instruction. This may include courses that are delivered fully online, such as math, animal behaviour, ethics, and animal diseases. Other courses may have pre-lab components that you are required to complete from home. A significant portion of anatomy and physiology labs are also designed to be completed from your home. Online learning may be in real-time or asynchronous. We are continually offering more asynchronous attendance options to add flexibility to the distance student’s schedule.

A portion of learning will take a place in a clinical setting. All distance students are required to have a Host Clinic that supports learning for the duration of the program. Expect to spend two days per week at your Host Clinic learning and practicing clinical skills.

A portion of learning (approximately 15% of the program) takes place in Saskatoon. During these residencies, distance students travel to Saskatoon to complete labs and assessments, and learn at the WCVM. The residency for each semester is approximately 1-2 weeks in length and may be split into one or two sessions per semester. During Semester 6, expect to complete a 4- to 5-week residency at the WCVM.

# Overview of Distant Seats

Eight distance seats are offered each year with a single September start. Students who are accepted to these seats will complete the same curriculum as in-person students; however, a majority of training will be conducted via distance using a combination of real-time online learning, asynchronous self-study, in-clinic learning, and residency labs (which occur in Saskatoon). The distance program is designed to be completed in 2 years.

To meet the curriculum requirements of the distance program, applicants must have a Host Clinic and Clinical Mentor for the duration of the program. Applicants must find their own Host Clinics and this must be in place at the time of applying to the program. Host Clinics should be a mixed animal practice to meet program requirements.

The theoretical courses will follow a traditional format of quizzes, assignments, midterm(s), and a final exam. When possible, the majority of theoretical courses are offered in a manner that allows distance students the option of attending in real-time or asynchronously. Courses with laboratory components will have essential skills assignments that the student must perform to the satisfaction of the Clinical Mentor and the official course instructor. The Clinical Mentor will be asked to sign off on some student assignments. The student, depending on the course and the assignment, will be required from time to time to submit videos that demonstrate the student performing a skill. There may be other types of student-generated submissions required including radiology, case notes, etc. Other assessments are performed by program faculty and may be via distance or during residencies.

In addition to instructors for each course, each distance class has an assigned faculty lead whose main job is to oversee clinical learning components, essential skills tracking and assessments, and to act as a go-to for distance learning matters and student advising. This dedicated faculty is also the point of communication for Host Clinics and Clinical Mentors regarding learning matters and student issues.

## Highlights of Distant Seats

- ▶ Students complete 85% of their learning via distance, through online instruction, self-study and clinical instruction that is supported by clinic mentors.
- ▶ Students spend approximately two days per week participating in clinical learning at their Host Clinic in Semesters 1 through 4. In Semesters 5 and 6, students spend up to 10 weeks in the Host Clinic as a practicum work experience.
- ▶ Students return to campus at the end of each term for short residencies of 1- to 2 weeks duration in Semesters 1 through 5. There is a 4- to 5-week residency in Semester 6.
- ▶ Students complete a portion of their program at the Veterinary Medical Centre (VMC) at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVN) which is a state-of-the-art teaching and referral hospital that is responsible for training the majority of western Canada's veterinarians. The emphasis at the VMC is placed on anesthetic nursing, surgical nursing, and emergency and critical care.

# Where Learning Takes Place and Scheduling

This program is comprised of 3 learning methods in 3 locations:

## At your home

Online (virtual) learning using a combination of real-time and asynchronous methods. At-home labs (i.e. anatomy). Industry tours which you organize (e.g. dairy, feedlot).

## At your clinic

Clinical learning takes place in your Host Clinic. Be aware that the hours you will be expected to spend in your Host Clinic will far exceed "course hours". Minimum expectations for clinical hours will be set by the program but may be increased by your Host Clinic.

## In Saskatoon

These "residencies" are mandatory in-person sessions that take place in Saskatoon at Sask Polytech Main Campus and partnering facilities. There are a total of 7 weeks distributed between Semesters 1-5. An additional 5 weeks is expected in Semester 6 (to take place June through July of your final year).

**In other words: 85% of this program is delivered via a distance model. The remainder of the program is delivered in person. Applicants should be aware that attendance at in-person residencies is mandatory.**

During Saskatoon residencies, students will take place in full-day hands-on learning activities and assessments to meet curriculum and accreditation requirements. Some examples of learning activities that take place during in-person residencies include:

- Primary learning laboratories such as general chemistry, dissection, microbiology laboratories, dentistry, anesthesia, pharmacy, and dental radiology.
- Essential technical skills refinement and final assessment labs for a variety of subjects such as nursing skills, vital monitoring, diagnostic laboratory, surgical nursing, dentistry, and radiology.
- Primary rotations in anesthesia, ICU, and surgical nursing.
- Depending on the services offered by the host clinic, rotations can also be offered in small animal medicine or wellness, or large animal medicine to ensure instruction is well- rounded and meets all areas of training.

Students will require transportation in and around Saskatoon to partnering sites, such as Saskatoon SPCA, Western College of Veterinary Medicine, and Prairie Swine Centre. Residencies are typically one or two weeks at the end of each term. In the pilot class for Year 1, there were two shorter residencies per term. The residency in Semester 6 is 4-5 weeks in length. Due to the logistics of coordinating schedules with partnering institutions, the residency schedule is to be confirmed. There may also be slight variation in residencies based on services offered by and equipment Host Clinics have access to.

The student is responsible for all costs associated with travel and accommodation for residencies. The student is also responsible for arranging details of accommodation.



# Application to Distance Seats

Interested applicants apply to the Veterinary Technology program: <https://saskpolytech.ca/programs-and-courses/programs/Veterinary-Technology.aspx>).

Applicants to the distance seats must meet all application criteria for in-person seats. On the application form, under Program Information - Location, select the online or evening or distance option and submit Form C Host Clinic Form. This form is an understanding between the applicant, the Host Clinic, and the Clinical Mentor. It states that the Host Clinic will support the student for the duration of the program and that the student will commit to communication, learning and experiential learning hours at the clinic. Once form C is received, the applicant will be offered a seat for a distance program or placed on the waitlist for the next academic year.

The program operates by a first-qualified-first-accepted process. Here is how it works:

- Applicants submit their application form and application fee to hold their place in the admissions queue. Under Program Information - location, select the online or evening or distance option.
- Complete Orientation Checklist and Form A within 60 days. These online forms are found on our program webpage.
- Submit transcripts.
- Submit Form B when you have completed your volunteer hours.
- Find a Host Clinic(s). Submit Form C.
- (Steps 3-6 can be completed in any order.)
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*Note that final transcripts and Form B Declaration of Clinical Volunteer Hours must be received by August 1 of the intake year for acceptance to the program. Applicants who have fulfilled all other criteria may receive conditional acceptance until this date. If at any time you wish to move back to the in-person application pool, contact Enrollment Services.*



## Admissions Requirements

- Grade 12 with a minimum of 70% in each of the following subjects:
  - Biology 30
  - Chemistry 30
  - Foundations of Math 30 or Pre-Calculus 30\*
  - A combined average of 70% in English Language Arts A30 and B30
- English Language Requirement
- Completion of Mandatory Orientation\*
- 60 hours of documented veterinarian-supervised volunteer or work experience\*
- Signed agreement with a host clinic and clinical mentor to support student learning for the duration of the program.\*

*\*Mandatory checklist and required forms are found on the program website.*

## Technology Requirement

- To complete online courses, students require a laptop (preferred) or laptop and reliable internet. An unreliable internet connection is not an excuse for missed learning and/or incomplete assignments and assessments.
- Technical requirements:
  - Windows: 10, 8, 7; Mac: OS X 10.10 or higher
  - Web camera (internal or external) & microphone
  - A broadband internet connection
  - Memory
    - Windows: 75 MB of permanent space on the hard drive
    - Mac: 120 MB permanent space on the hard drive
- Tablets and cell phones are not appropriate for online learning. Chromebooks may be limited in some applications.
- Must have video conferencing ability, including good quality headset/speaker and microphone. Must have the ability to capture and send electronic photos and video.
- Live lectures and virtual meetings are conducted using Zoom. Zoom will download automatically when you start or join your first Zoom meeting. An up-to-date web browser is required for increased functionality and increased security.

## Host Clinic and Clinical Mentor Requirement

- Applicants apply to the distance program with a partnering veterinary clinic and clinical mentor. Finding a partnering clinic to support the minimum 2-year learning journey is the responsibility of the applicant
- Host Clinics must be licensed as per provincial requirements and must meet or exceed minimum practice standards as set out in provincial Practice Standards.
- Clinics must have access to both small animal (feline and canine) and large animal (bovine and equine) caseloads. Clinics must perform small animal general surgery (minimum requirement is dog spay under general inhalant anesthesia). Clinics must commit to providing the student with access to patients, materials and supplies for training purposes, and to working with the Veterinary Technology program to facilitate learning as outlined in the curriculum and program policies and procedures.
- Students may have two host clinics if the primary clinic is unable to provide the diagnostic testing for specialty courses.
- Host Clinics must provide one or more Sask Polytech Veterinary Technology program-approved Clinic Mentors who are licensed veterinarians and/or an RVT who graduated from a CVMA- accredited training program with a minimum of 2-years clinic experience. Clinical Mentors work with the program and the student to create training opportunities, instruct on technical skills, and provide both formative and evaluative feedback.
- The applicant, Host Clinic and Clinic Mentor should review Form C (Appendix) for details.
- Note that employment is NOT a requirement of the student-host clinic relationship. However, parties are strongly encouraged to trial a volunteer/work period before completing Form C to ensure compatibility.

# Applicant Q&A

## What skills and aptitudes will contribute to success in distance learning?

Applicants to the program should be self-motivated learners with strong oral and written communication skills that allow for reaching out to ask questions, ask for opportunities and to ask for feedback. Individuals will require strong organizational skills to succeed. Success in the profession also requires strong skills in the following areas: communication with a team and clients, math skills with emphasis on accuracy, problem-solving skills, ability to lead and take initiative, and attention to detail. Most jobs within the profession also require a degree of physical strength including the ability to lift, carry, and restrain.

## Is distance education easier than in-person classes?

Students in the distance program complete the same curriculum as the in-person cohort. In many ways, distance learning is more difficult as there is less opportunity to engage in class discussions and it is up to the distance learner to self-identify when they require clarification on a concept. It also requires motivation to ensure you are meeting learning goals both in terms of information acquisition and timelines. The distance student is also required to source their learning, such as finding a tour of a dairy facility and feedlot. This requires initiative, time, and the use of resources.

## I applied for an in-person seat – can I switch to a distance seat?

To move your application to a distance seat, simply contact enrollment services and indicate that you would like to move your application to the distance program and submit Form C. You will then be moved to the distance queue.

## Can I work while taking this program?

The distance program is a 2-year full-time program of study with an expected 40-hour/week commitment including study time. Scheduling of activities will be such that students should expect to take part in online learning and self-study 2-3 days per week, and have 2 days of clinic time. Students who are not struggling academically should be able to work part-time. If your employer is also your Host Clinic, it is expected that you could work up to 2-3 days per week (including some weekend hours).

## Does Sask Polytech arrange Host Clinics?

No. Applicants must find their own Host Clinics before applying to the program.

## How do I find a Host Clinic?

Applicants are required to find their own Host Clinics before applying to the program. A list of provincial veterinary practices is available on the Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association (SVMA) website: <https://svma.ca.thentiacloud.net/webs/svma/register/#>

The Student-Host Clinic-Clinic Mentor relationship will need to be in place for the duration of the program of study. It is important to ensure that all parties are a good fit. A good mentor- mentee relationship is a great way to build a long-term working relationship that will more than reward the investment in time and energy that it takes to provide clinical mentorship.

## What else do I need to know before selecting a Host Clinic?

Host Clinics must be able to provide a caseload in 4 species: canine, feline, equine, and bovine. Host Clinics must be approved by the program. One benefit of selecting a Host Clinic that is located in Saskatchewan is that the program coordinator can visit the learning site. In specific circumstances, it is possible to have a main Host Clinic and a secondary Host Clinic, in which case the secondary Host Clinic can provide caseload/equipment/procedures not available at the primary clinic.

## What happens if I start the program and then find that distance learning is not for me?

Students who are in good standing in the distance program have the option to switch to the in- person cohort at the end of a term (Semesters 1-4 only) provided there is space available. If there is no space available, they may be required to take a year off before joining the next in- person cohort.

## Do I have to come to Saskatoon for part of my training?

Yes. There are mandatory in-person sessions that are 1-2 weeks in length at the end of each term and 5 weeks in Semester 6. All costs associated with attending these required residencies are the responsibility of the student.

## How do I know if this distance program is the right one for me?

There are multiple distance options available for veterinary technology training in North America. We strongly recommend that you research the differences between the various options and select the one that is the best fit for you.



# Assessments

Assessment is through a combination of written assessment (assignments and exams), practical skills testing, and clinical skills assessments (including both technical and soft skills). To complete the program, students also must pass all essential skills as per CVMA accreditation and demonstrate employability within the profession.

Learners take part in both: (1) formative assessments which can result in both informal and formal feedback to improve knowledge and skills, and (2) final assessments which determine if learning objectives are achieved. Clinical Mentors have a large role in providing a formative assessment of soft skills and technical skills. Program faculty will complete the majority of final technical skills evaluation via distance (learners submit videos) or during residencies.

Written theory assessments (i.e., midterms and exams) are administered on paper or online through Brightspace, which is the online learning platform used by Sask Polytech. The distance faculty lead will communicate with the Clinic Mentor when there is an exam and the details of the exam.

- Online exams are written on the Brightspace online platform. Students will be directed if the exam is to be written at home, or while invigilated in the clinic.
- Paper exams are emailed to the Clinic Mentor. The Clinic Mentor is responsible for ensuring the confidentiality of the exam, the printing of the exam, providing the exam to the student to write at the designated date and time in the clinic, and invigilation.
- Invigilation at the clinic is described as the following: the student is assigned a secure room, all unnecessary electronic devices are removed and desktops are turned off; reference materials (posters, textbooks) are removed; the Clinic Mentor OR a designated staff member checks on the student at random times to ensure exam integrity; the exam is collected and returned to the program in a manner that maintains confidentiality of the exam.

Moving forward, distance students may be required to complete some exams using an invigilated testing center or online testing invigilation service (e.g., ProctorU). In the event a test center or online service is required, the cost will be the responsibility of the student.

All exams will be written at scheduled times. Exceptions are according to the Sask Polytech Veterinary Technology Program Manual attendance policies.

Some courses are graded on a Pass/Fail basis. Some courses have an attendance requirement to pass. Some courses have essential components that must be passed. Some courses have a fatal flaw grading component - this is where errors that would cause harm to a patient result in a grade of "0" and includes calculations for doses and unsafe practice.

## Program Progression and Completion

A minimum cumulative grade point (CGPA) average of 60% is required to progress from term to term. Students must also have a minimum CPGA of 60% at the end of graded courses in Semester 5 to progress to senior practicums and Semester 6.

The program has a single entry per academic year which means that if a course is failed, the student will have to re-take the course when it is offered the following year. This means that failing a course will add one academic year to the program length. Students who struggle with the distance format but remain in good standing with the program will have the option of transferring to the in-person cohort when a space becomes available.

## Learning Accommodations

Learning accommodations can be applied for through Student Services. Applicants should be aware that accuracy in interpretive reading and spelling are requirements of the program due to medical records requirements. Enquire about learning accommodations by contacting Student Services at: [studentservices@saskpolytech.ca](mailto:studentservices@saskpolytech.ca).