

The Training Puzzle Solved!

By Helen Power AVN

Now you have enough time to study, but there's so much jargon out there and so many courses to choose from, where do you start? Helen Power has put this guide together to help you.

Which course to take to become a Veterinary Nurse

Some courses on offer imply that they give training to become a Veterinary Nurse. However, to become a qualified Veterinary Nurse you must complete the **Certificate IV Veterinary Nurse** course. This will also involve you completing Certificate II in Animal Studies prior to starting Certificate IV Veterinary Nursing. It is possible that your Registered Training Organisation (RTO) may enrol you directly into Certificate IV, but this is just enrolment terminology and you are still required to complete the Certificate 2 prerequisite core units.

How is it delivered?

Training can be delivered in a number of ways ranging from attendance at college one day per week, block release 2-3 times per year, distance education/correspondence or full time training.

The premise of the national training package for Veterinary Nursing is to ensure that students gain theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The practical skills are to be learned in the workplace. This is why one of the requisites for enrolling is that you have employment in a Veterinary Practice for a minimum number of hours per week. As part of your training, you will be required to demonstrate your skills in the workplace or a simulated veterinary practice, to a qualified workplace assessor.

When considering which option is best for you, think about the following:

One day per week:

This usually involves attendance at a college one day per week where you should have face-to-face lectures by a teacher. You will have lectures, exams and assignments to complete. Your practical skills will be developed in the workplace. You need to take into account the time required for you to be away from the practice one day per week and if this is viable for both yourself and the practice. Most students are not paid while they are away from work. For some students face-to-face lectures are the best way for them to learn.

Block Release:

This involves attending face-to-face lectures but instead of attending one day per week you attend the college for 1-2 weeks at a time, usually twice per year. The rest of the time you spend at work developing your practical skills and completing assignments. As you need to take longer periods of time off work you need to consider if this time off is taken as unpaid leave, part of your holidays or whether your employer will still pay your wages. You will also need to consider additional expenses such as travel and accommodation.

Distance Education:

This involves studying at home and/or work without face-to-face lectures by a teacher. While you should have support of your college, you need to be self driven and have the motivation to complete your study requirements. Distance education does not require you to take time off work to attend college. Distance education offers flexibility of training in that you are able to continue working and earning a wage. Often distance education centres will offer networking opportunities or other support systems to assist students with keeping motivated.

Full Time Study:

This involves attending college full time, every day per week, as per normal schooling. Students will still need to gain practical experience in a Veterinary Practice or simulated practice to fulfil the practical component of the course. The college may require you to attend a veterinary practice to gain your practical skills if they do not have a veterinary clinic attached to the college. As you are studying full time you may not have the opportunity to be employed.

Which Training Organisation to Choose.

You should ensure that the training organisation you choose is able to meet your requirements. The training organisation should be licensed to deliver Certificate II in Animal Studies and Certificate IV Veterinary Nursing.

The training organisation should also have Vocational Training & Advisory Board (VTAB) accreditation. VTAB is the government organisation that registers and licences training organisations. Before you make your final choice of a training organisation, make sure that the college can issue you a “statement of attainment” or academic transcript that directly relates to the units of the training package for Certificate II Animal Studies and Certificate IV Veterinary Nursing. This will ensure that if you transfer to a different college then you have a record of the individual units from the training package that you have completed.

The training organisation you choose should be able to discuss with you the different study options they have available and their delivery and assessment strategies. Not all colleges offer all options. All colleges must offer you the ability to gain your qualification through the recognition of prior learning (RPL), recognition of current competency (RCC), or skills recognition (SK). This is particularly important for those Veterinary Nurses who may have a prior qualification or have a number of years of industry experience without an actual qualification.

RPL/RCC/SR looks at the skills you have developed and the understanding you have of what you do. You will be required to provide evidence to the college of your skills and knowledge. The evidence may be in the form of exams, case studies, videos, prior qualifications etc. This is then compared to the requirements of the training package. Gaps in knowledge and skills are identified and you will then be required to complete study to “fill in” any of these gaps. A workplace assessment should be performed to verify your knowledge & practical skill within the practice.

How long should it take?

The training package does not state how long it should take to complete all of the units required to gain a Certificate IV Veterinary Nurse qualification. The mode of delivery will affect the time frames of delivery. On average it should take 3 years to gain Certificate II in Animal Studies and then Certificate IV Veterinary Nursing.

How much should it cost?

The cost of your training will vary depending on the mode of delivery and which college you attend. You should consider the following in your overall costs: enrolment fees, administration fees, assessment fee, travel fees, accommodation fees, loss of pay if taking time off work to attend college and academic and financial penalties for withdrawal or failure to complete within timeframes. Fees for RCC/RPL should also be considered. Traineeships are available to help with the cost of training and you should discuss this with your employer and local traineeship office.

The National Training Information Service www.training.gov.au is a great place to start looking for the best RTO to meet your needs. Click on the VNCA website under “My Career” for more training info.