

Your guide to thrive

Navigating life
after graduation





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Introduction

The exciting journey ahead

Taking the first steps on your veterinary career journey is exciting, but also daunting.

At IVC Evidensia we are familiar with this process and how you can get the most from the first steps of your career journey, and that's why we've created a handy guide to support you through this time of change.

Whether you're looking for advice on how to tackle your first job interview, mental health resources you can access once in practice, tips on transitioning to your first full-time role as a vet surgeon, or on managing your student debt effectively - we've got you covered.



Ask plenty of questions and find out what else the practice has to offer beyond the standard working day. Look at the equipment and facilities available in the practice and also consider the benefits offered by the practice... it's important to consider the entire package when making your decision.

Luke McBlain
Graduate vet

Job hunting

Finding the right role for you and applying

As a newly qualified vet surgeon, you have a wealth of options and opportunities in front of you. Whether you decide to join a graduate programme, explore a specialism through an internship or choose to join a local practice where you feel most at home.

Whichever route you explore, it's important to consider -

1 What is your long-term career plan?

You may not be totally decided, but it's helpful to have an idea of what you're aiming for, to help you forge the path to get there.

Whether you see yourself as an experienced first-opinion vet, a specialist surgeon, focusing on equine, large animal, or emergency and critical care keeping that end goal in mind will help you get there. It's OK not to have a clear idea of your future goals at this stage, now is a great time to be exploring different career paths that feel interesting and rewarding to you.

2 How do you find job satisfaction?

Factors to bear in mind include considering how the work schedule aligns with your lifestyle and personal commitments, the availability of experienced mentors who can guide you in your early career, the practice's approach to client relationships and communication, and how well you will fit into the practice culture and if it aligns with your values. Look for practices that prioritise employee wellness and mental health, and when the time comes, always carefully review the terms of your employment contract.

3 How flexible are you in terms of location?

Are you open to relocating from your current location or does your home life mean that you need to consider commutable distance?

Narrowing down the opportunities in front of you to the ones that fit what you want will allow you to focus your energy and be more effective in your job search.

Finding a practice that feels the right fit for you is often the best way to approach a job opportunity. Identifying your priorities and what you value most, and then making a decision about whether a practice meets those standards is a good way to approach this. Many practices will allow you to go in for a day to see how it feels, which can give you a lot more information about whether it's what you want.



Your CV

Most employers will ask for a CV and cover letter as part of the application process. This is your opportunity to sell yourself to a prospective employer, so tailor your approach to the specific job you are applying for. Every job and every opportunity is different.

Creating a basic CV that includes generic information about you gives you a strong foundation that can be tailored for each application. Your generic CV should include:

1 Your contact details

Provide a professional email address that includes your name.

2 A professional profile

Sum up who you are and what you're about. Demonstrate the skills and knowledge that you have, as well as what makes you a great potential member of the team. Maybe you're a keen learner with an eye for detail, or a positive and energised member of the team - what makes you unique?

3 A career summary

This could include any employment history, extra-curricular work completed whilst studying, research you have undertaken and other relevant experiences, including any practical experience such as EMS placements, as well as other responsibilities and tasks that you've completed outside of your studies. This could include membership of societies at university, as well as part-time jobs etc

4 Professional development and key skills

This should include your degree/route of study, but should also showcase your key skills which give any prospective employer an insight into your experience level and areas of interest.

5 Interests and hobbies

Show your personality and demonstrate that you have interests and experiences outside of the veterinary world.

Your cover letter

Showing personality is key to making your application stand out, but it can be difficult to express that within a CV.

A cover letter is where you share more of yourself, why you want to work at a specific practice or hospital, and more about the skills and experience you bring with you.

This is your opportunity to share your passion for vet medicine and explain how that passion has developed and grown throughout your studies.

Personalise each application

Be sure to add something unique that shows why you would be a good fit for the specific role you're applying for.



Highlight not just your technical skills but also your communication, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities. These skills are crucial in a veterinary career.

Christopher Long
Talent business manager
for the IVC Evidensia
Graduate Academy



Networking

Building connections and using social media

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As a veterinary student or recent graduate, you're not just embarking on a career, you're joining a passionate and supportive community of professionals dedicated to the well-being of animals.

In this world, networking isn't just a buzzword; it's a valuable tool for success. For some, it may feel an uncomfortable prospect, but fundamentally it's just about getting to know other vet professionals and sharing your interests.

As a newly qualified vet surgeon, you are in demand! Using professional social media means that you can share your career successes with peers and colleagues, and with potential future employers.

LinkedIn is like a professional version of Facebook. It allows you (and potential employers) to search for relevant industry professionals and connect with them. Even if you're not thinking about it now, when the dream role comes up, having a LinkedIn profile can be a big help to showcase who you are, discover new opportunities, and connect with like-minded professionals.





How to use LinkedIn

The first step is to set up a profile if you haven't already

1 Your picture

The picture should be a simple headshot. It should be professional, but it doesn't have to be boring or artificial. People remember faces more than names.

2 Your headline

You have 120 characters at the top of your profile to describe to the world what you do. Choose descriptive, searchable terms and keywords that help you get found by the right people.

3 Your summary

It's worthwhile to put in the effort to write a captivating summary section. These are the first sentences people read, and you have a very short time to ensure your audience captures the key information about you that is genuine and can be evidenced.

4 Your experience

This is the body of your profile - just like on a traditional CV, you showcase your experience, expertise, and skills. Typically your CV includes your current position and at least two other positions but as a new graduate you might not have these roles yet. Include any relevant experience you have gained. Don't forget about transferable skills - a part-time role may have given you customer-facing experience, which is an important skill in a veterinary practice.

5 Skills, endorsements and keywords

Include keywords whenever it feels appropriate, especially in the 'Summary' and 'Experience' sections, for search engine optimisation (SEO) purposes. When people use LinkedIn, they use certain industry-specific key words. These are the terms that will help you show up in search results for example; vet nurse, vet surgeon, emergency and critical care, equine etc. You can also list your skills, and request endorsements from colleagues or employers (similar to a reference, but more informal).

6 Groups and associations

Groups are a way to build relationships and network with people who are doing similar work or have similar interests as you. You have a huge range of groups on LinkedIn to choose from. Join as many relevant groups as you can and contribute to the conversation.

As a start, join the alumni groups for where you went to school and any industry association groups pertinent to the line of work you're interested in. When you join the discussion, try to lend your expertise to benefit the conversation and to show your interest as well as your value.



Being invited to interview is a great sign! It shows that your application was relevant and comprehensive, and you should be really proud of reaching this stage.

Once you have your first interview booked, you may find yourself feeling a bit apprehensive! This is totally normal, it's a new experience.

Just remember you're a skilled vet professional, and the interview is a chance to share your authentic self with your potential employer, and to find out if they're a good fit for you.

1 Prepare and research

Successful interviews begin with thorough preparation. Research the veterinary practice and organisation you're interviewing with. Understand their values, and mission, and look at any recent news or developments. Tailor your responses to show how you align with their culture and goals. Knowing about their clients, services, and any unique aspects of the practice or hospital can help you stand out. Looking on the practice website, and if the practice is part of a wider network their website can be a great source of information too.

Talk to us about your interests, your EMS experience, and where you see yourself in the future. Ask questions too! Taking a new job is a big step for everyone, you probably have questions, so do share them.

Julia Nistor
Talent Partner
IVC Evidensia

2 Showcase your skills

- You've spent years honing your skills. Use your interview to highlight these abilities.
- Discuss cases you've worked on during your studies or clinical rotations.
- Emphasise any specialised knowledge or experiences that set you apart.
- Be ready to discuss complex cases you've handled, your surgical proficiencies, and your ability to handle emergencies.
- Don't be afraid to share areas where you're looking to learn more too - your first role as a graduate is an important stage of your career journey, and you should feel supported in developing your skills.
- Giving examples of how you overcame a difficult scenario can be valuable at showing your capacity for resilience, tenacity, and problem-solving skills that are key/valuable skills as part of the role of being a veterinary surgeon.

3 Interview the interviewers

This isn't just about whether the practice or hospital wants you! It's also a question of whether this role and location is the right fit for you too. Ask about mentorship support, additional benefits, CPD opportunities and any other areas that feel important to you.

Not only does asking questions show confidence, it also ensures you have the information you need to make the right decision for you.

While you'll have spent plenty of time in practice during your studies, the day you start your first role as a newly graduated vet is an important one. It marks the move into the next phase of your career journey, and it can help to approach it with the right frame of mind.

Embrace hands-on learning

Embrace the hands-on learning you'll be presented with. Don't be afraid to get your hands dirty, because it's where you'll truly develop your clinical skills. During your studies, make the most of EMS placements and clinical rotations to gain real-world experience.

Effective communication

You'll be working with a wide variety of people, including pet owners, vets, nurses, and other support staff. Great communication is key to building trust, providing excellent patient care, and fostering teamwork. Practice active listening and conveying complex medical information in a way that's understandable to clients.

Use the skills you've already developed

Use the skills you've already developed during your studies - these include good organisational skills, time management, and the ability to prioritise tasks effectively - now is the chance to apply these abilities in a professional setting.

Seek mentorship

Make the most of guidance and mentorship from nurses and vets around you. They can offer invaluable insights, share their experiences, and provide you with guidance as you make the transition. Learning from their real-world expertise can greatly enhance your own clinical skills. If you're undertaking a graduate programme like the IVC Evidensia Graduate Academy, you'll be supported by a mentor with structured learning, and during your daily life in the clinic.

Self-care

The transition from studies to full-time work can be mentally and physically taxing. Remember to take care of yourself. Proper self-care, including a healthy work/life balance, regular exercise, and stress management techniques, can help you stay focused, alert and energised.


Keep these tips in mind as you embark on this exciting new phase of your veterinary career.



*Consider
your options when
deciding on a practice,
sometimes relocating for
the right role can be a
great option for your
career journey.*

Christopher Long
Talent business manager
for the IVC Evidensia
Graduate Academy

Making the most of mentorship



Don't wait too long to turn your dreams into reality.

Hugo Schmökel, small animal surgery specialist, on the advice he'd give his graduate self

As a vet student, you're already aware of the importance of mentorship in your journey to becoming a successful veterinarian. Mentorship provides you with guidance, support, and the opportunity to learn from experienced professionals. Here's how you can make the most of mentorship:

1 Embrace the learning experience

Mentorship is not just about receiving advice; it's about actively engaging in a learning experience. Your mentors have a wealth of knowledge and practical wisdom to share. Be open to their guidance, ask questions, and seek their feedback. Recognise that learning is an ongoing process, and mentorship is a powerful tool in your professional development.

2 Set clear goals

Establish clear goals for what you hope to achieve. Whether it's honing your surgical skills, improving your communication with clients, or mastering a specific aspect of veterinary medicine, having defined objectives will help you and your mentor focus your efforts.

3 Network and build relationships

In addition to your primary mentor, take the opportunity to network and build relationships with other professionals in the field. Mentorship programs often provide access to a community of experts who can offer diverse perspectives and experiences.

4 Be proactive

Take the initiative in your mentorship journey. Don't wait for your mentors to reach out to you; instead, seek feedback, schedule meetings, and express your eagerness to learn. Being proactive demonstrates your commitment to your own growth.

5 Reflect and apply

Effective mentorship is a two-way street. After each interaction with your mentors, take the time to reflect on what you've learned and how you can apply it in your clinical work. Implement the knowledge and skills you've gained to continually improve your veterinary practice.

Pursuing higher education for most people means taking on student loans. Managing your student debt can be stressful, so to help you navigate this challenge, we've gathered valuable tips on managing student debt.

1 Understand your loans

The first step in managing student debt is to fully understand your loans. In the UK, most students receive loans through the Student Loans Company (SLC). These loans come with terms that differ from traditional loans, including income-based repayment and interest rates linked to inflation. It's essential to grasp the specifics of your loans and how they will be repaid. You may also have personal loans or credit cards. It's important to be aware that you may no longer be eligible for the benefits of a student bank account now you've graduated, so it's a good idea to check in about your specific circumstances

2 Create a budget

One of the most powerful tools for managing student debt is creating a budget. Record your income and expenses to gain a clear overview of your financial situation. A well-structured budget will help you identify areas where you can make savings and allocate more funds to your repayments.

3 Explore repayment plans

In the UK, student loan repayments are income-contingent, meaning you'll only start repaying when your income exceeds a certain threshold. Research the different repayment plans available, including Plan 1 and Plan 2, and how they affect your monthly payments. It's important to understand interest rates and the impact of additional payments etc on your repayments - these will be different for everyone.

4 Prioritise high-interest debt

If you have multiple loans, focus on repaying the one with the highest interest rate first. This strategy will save you money in the long term.

5 Ask for help

Don't hesitate to seek guidance if you're struggling or feeling overwhelmed by your finances. The charity VetLife offers support for financial concerns and for mental and emotional wellbeing, to all vet students, vets, and vet nurses. At IVC Evidensia, we also have our Employee Assistance programme which provides 24/7 confidential help to our team members. They can be called at any time for friendly support on medical, legal and financial issues in the strictest confidence.

6 Stay committed

Managing student debt is a journey that requires commitment. Stay consistent with your payments, and adhere to your budget, and over time, you'll make significant progress in reducing your credit commitments.

7 Explore your options once you graduate

If you have a high burden of student debt, perhaps a student overdraft in addition to your tuition fee and maintenance loans, once you graduate it can be a priority to pay these off. Seeking out a job that comes with a bonus or lump sum can make a big difference in the long term. For example, IVC Evidensia offers a relocation bonus for many experienced vet roles across our network. If you're willing to consider moving for a job, you may get benefits that make it easier to reduce outgoings and debts.

With careful planning and dedication, you can take control of your financial future, enjoy your time as a student, and begin your veterinary career while managing and ultimately reducing your student loan burden effectively.

It's sadly all too common for vet professionals to overlook their wellbeing in their dedication to caring for animals and their clients. However, it's crucial to remember that your mental health matters just as much as the health of the patients you'll treat. Prioritising your well-being isn't selfish; it's a necessary act that supports your well-being and ultimately your ability to be part of the team. Everyone is different when it comes to self-care, but activities like mindfulness meditation, yoga, journaling, taking part in social activities, and physical activity can all be beneficial for your mood.

1 Caring for others starts with self-care

The career path you've chosen is focused on caring for animals and supporting their owners. However, effective caregiving starts with self-care. When you nurture your mental health, you are better equipped to provide compassionate and competent care to your patients and clients.

2 Long-term thinking

The veterinary profession is known for being challenging at times, from long hours and difficult cases to emotional challenges. By prioritising your mental health, you can enhance your resilience and better cope with the demands of the job, reducing the risk of burnout.

3 Changing the game

Prioritising your mental health can encourage a culture of well-being in your class or practice. By openly discussing mental health and taking proactive steps to care for yourself, you inspire you're your teammates to feel comfortable doing the same, fostering a supportive and compassionate environment. Many workplaces will have mental health first aiders, a role that exists to encourage open discussion and support for mental health issues.

4 Mental health is an ongoing journey

Just as veterinary medicine is a continuous learning process, mental health is an ongoing journey. Regular self-care practices, such as mindfulness, exercise, or hobbies, can help you maintain a positive mental state over time.

5 Reach out if you need support

Reach out if you need support - whether that's to friends, family, or colleagues. Your team at work are there to support you. If you're finding things difficult, there are lots of resources out there, and the first step is to acknowledge that you might need some extra help.

I'd tell my younger self to work a little less hard... as a referral clinician, you often work long hours, attend conferences, take work home, read journals, write lectures and articles. Taking some time for relaxation and a work/life balance is essential.

James McMurrough
Advanced practitioner in
internal medicine and
cardiology

Resources



If you find yourself struggling or have any concerns, it's always important to reach out and ask for help. It can be the hardest step to take, but it's the best way to get support and to improve things.

Vet Life

VetLife are a fantastic charity that offers emotional, financial, and mental health support to the veterinary community. They're available 24 hours, 365 days a year. You can reach out via phone, text, email, or message, and it's totally confidential: www.vetlife.org.uk

wellbeing to reduce the chances of experiencing different conditions. The App can be downloaded from the Apple App Store, or Google Play Store by typing in Vets in Mind.

Employee Assistance Programme

Once you're in practice, many employers will have an Employee Assistance Programme. At IVC Evidensia this includes access to a 24-hour confidential helpline for medical, legal and financial issues in the strictest confidence, as well as up to six structured telephone counselling sessions, per issue, per year for the employee, partner or spouse and dependents.

Share how you feel

Your team in practice is there as a support network. If you don't feel able to use any of the above resources, try speaking to your manager or just a friend at work and sharing how you feel. Sometimes that can make a big difference, and it can also help you take the next step such as accessing additional support services.

Vets in Mind

The Vets In Mind app is a free to use app, designed to support the mental health and welfare of the whole veterinary sector. It provides concise information on a number of mental health topics, such as anger, anxiety, substance abuse, depression, burn out, self-harm and suicide, as well as what measures can be taken to help oneself, a colleague, friend or family member help signpost towards professional support. It also provides information on building resilience and

Taking care of your mental health as a veterinarian is not only essential for your personal wellbeing but also for the animals and clients you serve and the profession as a whole. By prioritising your own mental health, you set a positive example and promote a culture of well-being in the veterinary community. Remember, your mental health matters, and it's a fundamental aspect of being a successful and compassionate veterinarian.





Talent Business Manager Christopher Long shares his advice on applying for a graduate programme:

Research the practice and organisation

Understand the company's values, mission, and culture. Tailor your application to align with these aspects.

Highlight relevant experience

Showcase any relevant internships, clinical rotations, or extracurricular activities that demonstrate your skills and passion for veterinary medicine.

Emphasise soft skills

Highlight not just your technical skills but also your communication, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities. These skills are crucial in a veterinary career.

Prepare for interview scenarios

Practice common interview questions and scenarios specific to veterinary medicine. Be ready to discuss clinical cases, ethical dilemmas, and your approach to teamwork and client communication.

Show enthusiasm and adaptability

Demonstrate your eagerness to learn, grow, and adapt within a dynamic veterinary environment. Showcase your passion for continuous learning and improvement.

Network and seek insights

Connect with current or past participants in the program, if possible, to gain insights into what the academy values and looks for in applicants.

Be authentic

Be yourself during the interview. Authenticity often shines through and can make a strong impression on interviewers.



Tips from Sophie, Group Head of Graduate Academies

- If you are lucky enough to have multiple offers, or considering multiple roles, consider the whole benefits package such as CPD allowance, holidays, pension, wellbeing support and longer-term career support, not just initial salary
- It's OK not to know all the answers in an interview; be honest and if you don't have an example, talk about how you would approach the scenario or explain how you would go about finding the answer.
- Follow other veterinary professionals on LinkedIn to keep up to date on industry trends / learn about others' career journeys/hear about opportunities
- Ease the pressure on yourself and acknowledge that you won't know (or be expected to know) everything on day one or even month one of a new role; instead think about how you can find out the information you need.

Why joining a graduate scheme is a game changer

As you near the finish line of your veterinary degree, you're likely filled with a mix of excitement and anticipation about your future in the world of animal care. One option available to you as the next stage of your career journey is to join a graduate programme. But why should you consider this path, and what benefits does it hold for your future career?

Transitioning to professional life

The leap from vet student to working vet can be daunting. Graduate schemes like the IVC Evidensia Graduate Academy provide a structured and supportive transition. You'll step into your first graduate role in a practice or hospital with the guidance of a dedicated Vet GDP Advisor or Academy Clinical Coach.

Continuous learning and development

The IVC Evidensia Graduate Academy offers a comprehensive Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training curriculum, designed to further your clinical knowledge and practical skills. Whether you want to refine your clinical expertise, improve communication, or develop your skills, a graduate programme has you covered and ensures you'll have access to everything you need to succeed.



Building a support network

In the veterinary profession, peer support is invaluable. Graduate schemes connect you with a cohort of fellow graduates. This network of peers will be an essential source of guidance, shared experiences, and emotional support as you navigate the early stages of your career. With IVC Evidensia, you'll have access to a global network of peers that you can build connections with.

Expanding career horizons

IVC Evidensia's Graduate Academy opens doors to a broad spectrum of career opportunities. Whether your passion lies in small animal, farm, equine, or a combination of these fields, there's a tailored learning path to match your interests and career aspirations.



Research opportunities

Passionate about research? We offer the opportunity to apply for research funding to explore your area of interest.

Financial independence

Worried about the financial aspect of starting your career? The IVC Evidensia Graduate Academy offers a competitive starting salary that increases as you progress, and even in some scenarios, an additional relocation bonus.

A caring and inclusive community

Joining IVC Evidensia's Graduate Academy means becoming part of a caring and inclusive community. We're dedicated to supporting your well-being, promoting inclusivity, and nurturing the brightest futures in veterinary medicine.

If you're a newly graduating vet student, joining a graduate scheme can be a game changer for your career.

It offers the support and resources to transition smoothly into professional life, continuous learning and development, a valuable support network, and numerous opportunities to excel in your chosen field.

So, as you stand at the threshold of your veterinary career, consider the tremendous advantages that come with becoming a part of the IVC Evidensia Graduate Academy programme. Your journey to becoming the best you can be, is just beginning.

Find out more
ivcevidensia.co.uk/graduate-academy

If you want to find out more
about how IVC Evidensia can
shape your journey contact our
dedicated Graduate Talent team
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