

UNOFFICIAL Frequently Asked Questions, Class of 2026

General admitted student information can be found here:

<https://vetmed.illinois.edu/education/doctor-veterinary-medicine-degree/admitted-student-info/>

Addendum: ***The admitted students page will not be updated to the class of 2026 until closer to the date classes start, but you can use this as a framework for now.***

This page was created by the c/o 2024 rep, Gracie Wischmeyer, based on common questions the c/o 2024 had at the start of their vet med journey. It has been updated by the class of 2025. If you have any questions that aren't on this list, please don't hesitate to reach out to Theodore Berlanga, c/o 2025 rep, at tb21@illinois.edu. There will be an in person Q&A with the class of 2025 set up near or during orientation week and myself and a few other students are working out the details for a virtual Q&A over the summer!

General

Q. Why did you choose Illinois? How's your first year going so far?

A. Everyone has a different answer for this question, but for many of us, the decision came down to ...

- We're in-state and going to Illinois will put us in hundreds of thousands of dollars less debt after graduation
- We didn't get in anywhere else (nothing to be embarrassed about - vet school admissions are whack)
- We have friends, family, and close colleagues that have gone to Illinois
- Integrated clinical rotations are a super cool, unique feature of Illinois's curriculum
- Illinois has a great program in X, Y, or Z area of interest
- 1,000's of other, personal reasons!

If you meet an upperclassmen and want to know more about their reasons for coming to Illinois, ask!

Q. I'm not sure which species I want to work with. How can I figure that out at Illinois?

A. There are so many opportunities to figure out what you love. Join clubs, go to lunch lectures, find externships in different areas, pursue research, chat with professors, take electives in different subjects - there are so many ways to explore the field, and now is the time to do it!

Q. How are things working with the pandemic?

A. At this time UofI requires masks in classrooms during lectures except when eating or drinking. There may be adjustments to these regulations depending on COVID cases like after breaks or if there is a local spike in cases. All lectures are recorded on Echo360. Since you can access Echo online anywhere, students may also watch lectures from home although they aren't streamed live. Labs are all in person.

Q. What are next year's classes looking like with the pandemic?

A. The best source of information on this is going to be ASA. Be on the lookout for an email with more info at some point in the spring/summer.

Q. Are scholarships available?

A. Yes, but very few scholarships are available to incoming students. In January, current students are invited to apply for a large number of private scholarships through our Awards & Scholarships portal. Recipients are notified in mid- to late-April, and there's an Awards Banquet in May. The dean's office and ASA are also constantly sending out other opportunities for private scholarships.

Academics

Q. Is there anything I can do to be prepared for the first day of vet school?

A. You will be taught everything you need to learn in vet school, so don't worry about "getting ahead"! It will be manageable. You can do it. Spend some time with friends and family, get your supplies in order, and try to relax while you can.

Q. What is time management like? Will I still have free time for hobbies and extracurriculars?

A. You will have time for anything you are willing to make time for. It can be tricky to find a balance at first, but many of us have managed to maintain free time for relaxing, exercising, and engaging in hobbies while also studying enough to maintain grades. Making time for non-academic activities is **very important** to your mental health!

Q. How are lectures taught/curriculum structure?

A. Our school year is split into four, 8-week quarters. You will take one main course in each quarter, plus or minus elective courses that also run for 8 weeks. In first year, your four main courses are 602 → 601 → 603 → 604. (NOTE that 602 and 601 are swapped, which is a little confusing!)

Only one class per quarter seems pretty easy, but keep in mind that this is a whopping 9-credit hour course that covers all of **Structure and Function**. Each day is split into smaller, 50-minute long lectures that rotate between different subjects like physiology, histology, anatomy, neurobiology, and imaging.

In addition to these basic subjects, you will also participate in anatomy/dissection lab (typically ~2 hours 2x week), live, large animal palpation (~1.5 hours 1x week), histology lab (~2 hours 2x week), and clinical correlations (~2 hours 1x week). **Although your class schedule may change**, you can see how everything comes together in a typical week of classes below (this was our first week):

| | Mon 8/23 | Tue 8/24 | Wed 8/25 | Thu 8/26 | Fri 8/27 |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8am | OPTIONAL syllabus and general course discussion 2251 Sprandel | | | | |
| 9am | (1) PHYSIOLOGY Physio 1, biochem 1; proteins 1 2251 Das | (5) HISTOLOGY Histo 1: cells 2251 Yang | (7) IMAGING Imaging 1: intro to radiographs 2251 Madsen | (11) HISTOLOGY Histo 2: epithelia 2251 Yang | (12) IMAGING Imaging 2: oblique radiographs 2251 Madsen |
| 10am | (2) PHYSIOLOGY Physio 2, biochem 2; proteins 2 2251 Das | HISTOLOGY LAB Histology lab 1 2251 Yang, Sprandel, TAS | (8) PHYSIOLOGY Physio 3, biochem 3: DNA 2251 Das | HISTOLOGY LAB Histology lab 2 2251 Yang, Sprandel, TAS | (13) PHYSIOLOGY Physio 4, biochem 4: RNA 2251 Das |
| 11am | (3) NEUROBIOLOGY Neuro 1: cells and brain 2251 Gritton | | (9) NEUROBIOLOGY Neuro 2: resting potentials 2251 Gritton | | (14) NEUROBIOLOGY Neuro 3: potentials and synapses 2251 Gritton |
| 12pm | | | | | |
| 1pm | (4) GROSS ANATOMY Gross anatomy 1: Bones of the thoracic limb 2251 Davila | (6) CLINICAL CORRELATIONS Clin corr 1: evidence based medicine 2251 Mahoney/Kerby/Ziv-Gal | (10) GROSS ANATOMY Gross anatomy 2: Bones and extrinsic muscles of the thoracic limb 2251 Davila | | (15) GROSS ANATOMY Gross anatomy 3: Extrinsic and intrinsic muscles of the forelimb 2251 Davila |
| 2pm | GROSS ANATOMY LAB Anatomy lab 1 1730 Anatomy team | | GROSS ANATOMY LAB Anatomy lab 2 1730 Anatomy team | | GROSS ANATOMY LAB Anatomy lab 3 1730 Anatomy team |
| 3pm | | | | | |
| 4pm | | | | | |

Q. What subjects do you study in your first year? Do you just get one final letter grade for that class?

A. First years are tested on anatomy, physiology, histology, neurobiology, and imaging. You'll receive a final letter grade for the whole, 8-week course (ie. you'll earn separate grades for 602, 603, and 604). Your final grade is mostly based on exam performance (75%), but also includes quizzes, clinical correlations (typically an easy 'A'), palpation quizzes, weekly lab assessments, and a monthly anatomy lab score based on the completeness of your dissection.

Q. How do tests/quizzes work?

A. Your typical quiz/exam schedule in any given quarter looks like this:

Week 2: Quiz 1 on Thursday

Week 4: Midterm exam on Friday, no classes

Week 6: Quiz 2 on Thursday

Week 8: Final exam on Thursday AND Friday, no classes

The Midterm covers all content learned in the first four weeks of the quarter. Final Day 1 covers the second four weeks of the quarter (non-cumulative). Final Day 2 covers all material covered in the course (cumulative over the past 8 weeks).

One day before each exam (midterm and final), we have a Reading Day, where there are no classes.

The exception to this pattern is 601, which consists of weeklong rotations in different hands-on subjects like surgical skills or equine medicine. 601 rotations are graded on a pass/fail basis with no formal exams.

Q. How approachable are professors? Are they easy to get ahold of if questions arise?

A. Our professors are extremely approachable, especially in first year! Seriously, they are so, so nice. Many professors are more than willing to meet with students outside of class, or hold review sessions before quizzes/exams.

Q. Are lectures recorded, or are we allowed to record lectures?

A. All lectures are currently recorded. Even in non-COVID years, most lectures are typically still recorded.

Q. Is there a dress code for class?

A. Nope, go ahead and wear your pjs to lecture. For safety reasons, scrubs and a labcoat are required for anatomy lab, and coveralls and boots are required for palpation. No one really cares about tattoos until clinics, and even then, preferences vary from instructor-to-instructor. One of our classmates with full sleeves reports that no one has said anything about them so far.

Q. How are electives scheduled throughout the day for each quarter? Are most of them offered a few times per quarter/year/two years? Any recommendations when registering for electives?

A. Electives are scheduled outside of your normal curriculum schedule, with most being in the evening between 4-6pm, however this is entirely dependent on the class and professor. There are a handful of electives available for you to choose to take each quarter, ranging from zoo medicine to farm animal to equine and so much more. When you are registering for your basic classes you will also register for whichever electives you choose, and you can choose however many you want but be mindful and don't try to take on too much. All electives are pass/fail. I also highly recommend taking electives outside your comfort zone!

Q. Are elective streams tracked?

A No, you can take whichever electives you would like. If you want to track on a certain path (Equine for example), you can find all the electives offered in that area of interest on the Electives webpage. Do keep in mind that the electives webpage is a general resource and may not accurately reflect the electives you are able to sign up for in any given quarter. There is variability depending on the instructors' schedules that semester.

Housing & Transportation

Q. Where should I live?

A. Everyone looks for something different in terms of housing, and it's tough to say what will be right for you. [Here is a link](#) to students' feedback on different housing options in the area. [Here is a link](#) to a list of veterinary students seeking roommates.

Q. Where do I park, and how can I buy a parking pass?

A. Parking pass sales open up in late July, and upperclassmen usually have first dibs on the main vet med parking lot (F27). By the time passes open up to first years, most of you will likely end up buying passes for F30, along Lincoln Ave or F32.

Visit the [parking department's](#) website. The vet med parking lots can be found by clicking on 'View Map' and looking in the lower right hand corner. A 12-month parking pass is \$660. You can be put on waitlists for the F27 or any other close-by lot by contacting the parking department even before you purchase a parking pass, just be sure to have your UIN number handy. You'll want to get on the waitlist for F27 ASAP because the waitlist is over a year long.

Many students also choose to buy a MTD bus pass. The Raven bus stops at Vet Med multiple times throughout the day. You can explore routes and pass rates [here](#).

Supplies & Technology

Q. Where and when do you recommend purchasing supplies?

A. The Student American Veterinary Medicine Association (SAVMA, our main professional society) holds a big sale prior to the start of the school year for things like scrubs, coveralls, boots, surgical tools, etc. Usually we get a small student discount through the sale, but you can also buy all of the supplies separately.

The Production Medicine Club (PMC) also holds a big sale in the summer for cheap, used coveralls and boots.

Surgery Club sells gloves and scalpel blades in the spring/summer.

ASA hosts a stethoscope sale in the summer.

You will need your lab coat (provided by the school), scrubs, coveralls, and boots in the first week of school. Gloves and scalpel blades are typically provided in the first week of anatomy lab. You won't need a thermometer, stethoscope, or surgical tools until 601 rotations.

You can also get on the Vet Med Free and For Sale page on Facebook where a lot of older students sell things they don't use anymore. These things range from cheap anatomy scrubs to

NAVLE study materials, and even furniture and plants! You can find it here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1891837401090456>

Q. What type of stethoscope do you recommend?

A. The most popular stethoscope brand among veterinary professionals is 3M Littmann scopes, though any stethoscope is honestly fine for first year - we only do basic auscultation. Nicer stethoscopes like Littmanns are expensive, but they'll last you 10+ years if you take care of them properly. ASA holds a stethoscope sale every fall for incoming students, so watch your email!

Q. Should I order all of the required books?

A. I would at least recommend buying Dissection of the Dog, but you don't have to buy new. Many upperclassmen end up selling their old copies for \$10-20 on facebook in the summer and fall. None of the other textbooks are "required," per se. Your big sib may be able to share digital copies of textbooks with you as an alternative to buying new, expensive books.

Q. What are the different websites I'll be using most often?

A. Although things may change when COVID is less of a concern, you'll probably use three main websites- bookmark them!:

- Prior to the first day of class, an **intranet page** will be created for your class with a link to your course schedule (and lecture slides).
- You will use **Blackboard/Compass** to check your grades and submit assignments.
- **Echo360** is where classes are live-streamed, and lecture recordings are posted.

Our class also uses Zoom a lot for obvious reasons, and there is an application you'll need to download in order to view microscope slides for histology lab. Terrence, our tech coordinator, will send an email with all of the programs you'll need to download before classes start.

Other helpful websites:

- Veterinary Information Network/VIN- Free student membership that has lots of helpful diagrams, models, and other useful information
- Google Drive- most likely, someone in your class will make a Google drive for your entire class for you all to share study materials- help each other when you can!
 - There will also be class of 2026 Echo360 page for this same purpose
- Facebook- Illinois Vet Med Free and For Sale page and your class pages- the Free and For Sale pages have anything from textbooks to furniture and clothes, and everything in between!

Q. What are the laptop requirements?

A. Laptops must have certain specifications, but no specific brand or model is required. The specific requirements can be found [here](#). The only big requirement is that you must have a laptop for exams, so you can't have only a tablet.

Q. What are the best computer and note-taking devices?

A. If you like to write your notes, something with a touch screen would be ideal. Many people have 2 in 1 laptops so they can flip them to tablet mode during class. With the vast amount of material you are going to be going through making notes directly on provided slides is much more feasible than writing/typing everything being said during class. Some students have regular laptops as well as a tablet.

Extracurricular Activities

Q. How are clubs set up? Can I join more than one club?

A. You're welcome to join as many clubs as you'd like! Keep in mind that some clubs may have activity requirements (ie. you have to participate in a certain number of events), and most clubs require dues to join. Dues are anywhere from \$5-30 annually, and cover the cost of lunch lectures and other activities. Joining a club is a great opportunity to supplement our curriculum with a wide variety of other topics - and if you want to boost your resume, consider running for a position!

Many students end up joining a LOT of clubs at the beginning of first year, and choose a few they'd like to stick with as they progress through their time at U of I.

Q. Are there job opportunities for first years?

A. Yes, and they only increase in number as the year progresses and third-years move into clinics. So far, we've had job listings in the small animal clinic (several different areas), the lab, shelter med, and many more. You can also get paid to be a student representative for Purina, Hills, Royal Canin, etc.

Q. How do first year students get involved with the Wildlife Medical Clinic?

A. You'll have the opportunity to sign up to be a volunteer very early in your first quarter, probably during orientation. Spots may also open up later in the year.

General advice

Never question that you deserve to be here. You were chosen by the committee to be here for a reason and this is what you are meant to do. Never let anything (people or grades) convince you otherwise or make you doubt your intelligence or that this is the right career for you. You are meant to be here and your vet med journey is about to begin so congrats and enjoy it!