



**TUS**

**Technological University of the Shannon:  
Midlands Midwest**

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:  
Lár Tíre Iarthar Láir

## ***BSc in Veterinary Nursing***

# ***Work Placement Manual for external supervisors and students***

**Prepared by Department of Bioveterinary and Microbial Sciences  
Faculty of Science & Health**

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## INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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This manual contains general guidelines for the benefit of the partners in the veterinary nursing professional placement – the student, the external (placement) supervisor and the Technological University co-ordinator. To assist a successful placement, it is essential that each of the partners shares the same information from the outset; all parties should be aware of what is required of them throughout the process.

The placement is a module of the BSc (Ord) Veterinary Nursing programme, and as such, will be assessed. Successful assessment requires that the Technological University and the host Veterinary Practice collaborate. The module also introduces an element of Portfolio in the VN programme, which the student will develop based on his/her experiences. This model places specific demands on the Placement Supervisor, the Student and the Technological University. It has been developed to enhance reflective practice and thus benefit the student, the host practice and the eventual beneficiaries - the clients and patients.

It is expected that the vast majority of the students will present themselves for their placement focused on a clear set learning objectives. They have participated in a broad range of formative activities up to this point. It should prove to be an informative learning experience, enriching for all parties. Should a student present with major difficulties, the external supervisor should contact the Technological University tutor immediately. A student may not be ready, may require a further placement or perhaps need professional counselling. This will be negotiated by the relevant Technological University personnel, the placement supervisor and the student. These aspects have been further elaborated upon in relevant sections of the manual.

The placement is an opportunity for collegiality. Representatives of the profession will help to develop and validate the student's character and proficiency to practice prior to qualification. This transition requires significant effort from all of the parties involved.

*The stakeholders in these placements are required to reinforce the skills taught at Technological University of The Shannon in an applied fashion, facilitating the student in his/her placement experience as much as possible.*

These guidelines are based on current best practice and the experience of professional bodies, course tutors, and the acumen of established practitioners. We encourage both external supervisors and students participating in the programme to contribute to changes in future placement guidelines.

As an educational organisation, the collaboration of professionals in our programmes is essential and we would like to thank you for the experience, time and other resources that your practice will contribute.

We look forward to a satisfying and productive professional partnership between the students, the veterinary profession and the Technological University team.

### *BSc (Ord) Veterinary Nursing Programme Aim*

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The aim of the programme is to equip the applicant with the skills and competencies necessary to carry out the role of a veterinary nurse, in specific compliance with the Veterinary Council of Ireland (VCI) and ACOVENE.

### *Programme Learning Outcomes*

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On successful completion of this programme, graduates will be able to:

1. Work in collaboration with patients, clients and colleagues
2. Practise in accordance with professional, ethical and legal framework
3. Demonstrate the exercise of personal responsibility and decision making across a range of situations
4. Contribute to public protection by creating and maintaining a safe clinical environment
5. Apply theories, concepts and principles to deliver holistic care
6. Assess priorities in practice and deliver care competently to meet identified need
7. Formulate and document a plan of care in collaboration with and the consent of clients in the best interest of the patient
8. Accurately document and evaluate the outcomes of professional interventions
9. Participate in team work that respects and uses the contributions of workers in various disciplines
10. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the subjects underpinning nursing through application to a range of settings, including performance to current occupational standards where available
11. Provide safe and sensitive care through the use of practical skills and knowledge of current best practice
12. Use reflection to enhance professional practice

### *GUIDELINES FOR THE PLACEMENT SUPERVISOR (Vet Clinic)*

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Your practice has been included on the Technological University of the Shannon register of veterinary practices; we hope to engage with you in a dynamic manner, whereby all parties can benefit from this partnership. The education and training we provide our veterinary nursing students combine strong theoretical underpinning with constant exposure to practice through professional placement.

The placement component consists of an 8 - 14-week (5 day working week, up to 40 hours) work experience period in a partnering veterinary clinic of their choice. The aim of each placement is to afford the learner an opportunity to apply knowledge.

We would very much appreciate your assistance in encouraging and facilitating our students as much as possible. In return we hope our students can be of help to you in the running of your busy practice.

We request that the placement period be unpaid.

In order to meet the quality standards of the institute and the echo the standards encouraged by the Veterinary Council of Ireland, the placement supervisor in your clinic should sign a learning agreement with the student and that you collaborate in the assessment of the student's skills as observed while under your guidance. This is an integral part in the monitoring and assessment of our students throughout the course of their studies. The institute will arrange for the administration of such documentation in an on-line format and in order to ease the burden on the external

supervisor, the Technological University tutor will visit the practice at a pre-determined time. Each student is asked to complete a portfolio over the duration of the placements which must be returned one week after the placement finishes. All parties are bound by professional confidentiality.

If you have queries, please contact any of the Technological University representatives by email or phone.

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#### **PLACEMENT REGULATIONS AND OBJECTIVES**

Under the guidance of the Veterinary Council of Ireland, Technological University of the Shannon is committed to providing an organised placement in an appropriate setting under a suitably qualified supervisor to every student participating on the BSc Veterinary Nursing programme. This is of particular significance in the training of Veterinary Nurses who are required to engage with a multi-disciplinary job description.

#### **Technological University of the Shannon indicates the following:**

1. The placement must take place in appropriate work situations with a suitable veterinary practice which currently sits on the Technological University of the Shannon register of veterinary practices.
2. The student must be attached to one named person who is qualified and experienced to supervise the student.
3. The placement should comprise a normal 5 day working week (up to 40 hours) but should fit into the practice's normal working schedule.
4. Technological University should ensure that appropriate contact by tutors is maintained with students while on placement (usually through regular phone or email).
5. Student assessments should be carried out by the Technological University, in conjunction with the students and the Technological University tutor with responsibility for student placement.
6. On placement, students are to be assessed on a pass/fail basis for placements 1 and 2  
Placement 3 is graded according to programme schedule.

**The placement will also provide the student with opportunities to:**

1. Apply theoretical aspects of veterinary nursing as taught in Technological University to actual practice
2. Practice, under supervision, veterinary nursing skills
3. Learn about veterinary practice management a working situation
4. Establish suitability towards work as a veterinary practice manager
5. Identify and explore issues relating to personal effectiveness and development

***GUIDELINES FOR THE STUDENT***

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**ATTENDANCE**

1. It is envisaged that the student will treat the placement in the same manner as if he/she were an employee of the veterinary practice.
3. Absences will be in accordance with Technological University requirements i.e. for personal illness and immediate family emergencies only, or as agreed between the Technological University and placement, and will be communicated and logged by both the practice and the Technological University.
4. The general absentee allowance is one day in the course of the placement and in accordance with 2 above.
5. It will be the student's responsibility to notify an absence to both the Technological University and placement supervisor.
6. Any absences should be notified to the Technological University i.e. Head of Department or other designate (placement administrator), in the form of letter/doctor's certificate as appropriate forwarded immediately.
7. Absences arising from illness: It will be necessary to provide a doctor certificate which should be shown to the placement supervisor in the first instance, for signing, prior to the student forwarding the original Certificate to the Technological University.

A student requiring more than the maximum one-day absentee allowance due to illness should contact the Technological University placement co-ordinator, immediately this becomes apparent to ensure that the student will be able to comply with placement requirements.

Time missed during a placement for whatever reason will have to be compensated for in order to graduate.

**PREPARATION FOR PLACEMENT**

Before your placement you should consider at least 4 specific learning objectives, which you wish to achieve on placement. These objectives are reflected in your placement portfolio. You will then be asked to share these objectives with your placement supervisor during your first supervision session. You should be mindful that you are required to complete the portfolio **within the course** of the placement. You will be assessed on the learning outcomes required by the course and module descriptors.

## STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

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This manual is designed to help the practice supervisor, the educational process and to obtain the maximum benefit from the student placement experience.

*The following principles should be considered by the student while preparing to go on placement and during the working experience.*

The student should be fully informed of the general rules and regulations of Technological University of the Shannon, and those of the practice with which he/she is placed, particularly relating to Health and Safety and Human Resource issues.

A copy of the organisation's Safety Statement should be carefully read and understood. The host organisation will provide induction session which the student should be particularly attentive to. It is imperative that the student would self-preserve and be mindful of not causing harm to any other person (or animal) by act or omission.

The placement supervisor should regard these principles as appropriate for the duration of the placement, reflecting a timely frame of mind for the student.

### PRINCIPLES

1. You should ensure that you are fully prepared for your placement
2. You should recognise the limits of your competence but, in consultation with your academic and practice supervisors, seek to explore and develop new skills and understanding
3. You have a responsibility to be open and honest in relation to all aspect of the practice programme
4. You should be prepared to engage fully in the supervisory process, to accept constructive criticism and to reflect critically on your own practice.
5. You must observe the norms and regulations of the working environment. If you disagree with any aspect of these you must bring this to the attention of your supervisors for discussion
6. You have a responsibility to be sensitive to and to respect the organisational culture of the agency, its clients and employees
7. You should respect and understand the importance of confidentiality in all aspects of the placement and adhere to this principle in practice
8. You should always be aware of boundary issues, in particular between personal and professional engagement, and demonstrate this awareness in your practice
9. Any form of physical, verbal, emotional or sexual abuse of clients is regarded as gross misconduct
10. You should ensure that you are physically and mentally fit to undertake the placement. If you feel that there is any reason why you may not be physically or mentally fit to undertake the placement you should make this known to your placement co-ordinator in advance of beginning a placement.

Please Note: If you are involved in any research practice while on placement, you must ensure that you are informed about and adhere to ethical research principles

## ETHICAL ISSUES

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The placement forms an integral part of the education and training of professional veterinary practice managers. It is recognised that the role of the student is often ambiguous (i.e. somewhere between student and professional). It is also recognised that the practice placement is a developmental process, which involves varying levels of competence, responsibility and autonomy on the part of the student.

The student is reminded of the contract signed between the Technological University and the practice; agreeing to abide by the guidelines set out by Technological University of the Shannon and the host organisation. Please refer to these as a guide during your practice training.

As a student you may experience personal, professional and academic challenges while on placement. This is a natural part of the learning process. You may need help coping with some aspects of placement and it is your responsibility to seek this help. If you are finding things hard, approach your supervisor and the placement co-ordinator.

Some behaviour are unacceptable in the context of your veterinary nursing placement: for example, **attention seeking behaviour** (i.e. looking inappropriately for attention), **acting collusively** (i.e. siding secretly with 'clients' or staff), **engaging in delinquent behaviour** (i.e. stirring up trouble among 'clients or staff'). Language should be that of a professional and the student should adopt a professional demeanour at all times.

*In the event in a student engaging in unethical or unprofessional conduct, he/she will be deemed to have broken their placement contract, thus ending the placement. The Technological University, the placement agency, the student and any other relevant party/authority will discuss an appropriate course of action.*

**Confidentiality** is a vital element of the professional care relationship. As well as gaining a clear understanding of the general concept and practical implications around confidentiality, the student should check the practice's policy either before or at an early stage of their placement.

## THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

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The Placement Supervisor undertakes, in conjunction with, the Technological University, but also on behalf of the Veterinary Nursing Profession, to monitor the student's suitability to train and eventually practice as a veterinary nurse. The process, firstly, will require the Supervisor (in association with colleagues) to monitor and observe the student throughout the placement.

Secondly, the Supervisor will direct and support the student through regular meetings as the placement progresses. Besides encouraging the student towards best practice, these sessions will also help the Supervisor to be sure that the student is suited to the work. The student's Portfolio should be of assistance in this process.

Thirdly, should the Supervisor require support or encounter any unforeseen difficulties (such as mentioned below), the placement co-ordinator is willing and always available to engage in this process.

***While the Feedback Forms provide a framework for assessment, the absolute parameter must always be whether or not the student is fit to function as a veterinary nurse. This needs to be answered clearly and unambiguously.***

#### ***GUIDELINES WHERE THE STUDENT IS EXPERIENCING PERSONAL DIFFICULTIES***

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In the event of a student experiencing personal difficulties such as illness, domestic issues or bereavement it may be necessary to defer completion of the placement. If such issues arise it is required that they be brought to the attention of the Technological University as soon as possible. Suitable arrangements can be negotiated with the student, the placement agency and the Technological University.

#### ***GUIDELINES WHERE THE SUPERVISOR IS NOT COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITH THE STUDENT'S PERFORMANCE ON PLACEMENT***

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In cases where the Supervisor has reservation about some aspects of the Student's performance, the Head of Department or placement co-ordinator should be notified as early as possible. However, it may be possible, following discussion between all concerned, for the student to continue with his or her studies subject to a further satisfactory placement and /or evidence of appropriate attention to presenting difficulties. For example, it may occasionally be advisable for a student to receive professional counselling for personal issues before proceeding with further training.

#### **NOTE**

On rare occasions it may be necessary for a student to change placement. When this happens AIT will endeavour to keep all information relating to the change as confidential as possible, however, it may be necessary to share certain, relevant, information with the new placement supervisor.

#### ***GUIDELINES WHERE IT IS NECESSARY TO FAIL/TERMINATE A STUDENT'S PLACEMENT***

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The regulations of the Higher Education & Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) state:

*"Students who are deemed unsuitable to work in the area of 'hands on' veterinary nursing may need to be counselled – out of care work".*

If in the professional opinion of the Supervisor it becomes obvious that the student is not suitable, the supervisor should contact the Technological University, the Placement Co-ordinator, as soon as possible. If the Supervisor considers that the student may fail the placement, again, the Technological University must be contacted immediately and arrangements made for the student to be notified. It may be necessary to terminate the student's placement before the completion date if it is not possible to rectify the situation in the context of time limits etc. The Placement Assessment Form should be completed indicating placement outcomes. It is the Technological University's responsibility to counsel the student in such situations; to this end it will be necessary for the Head of Department/Placement co-ordinator to have a full and frank discussion of the situation with the Placement Supervisor, in person.

We may need to rely on referees named by students to testify as to their honesty and suitability as a veterinary nurse. The Placement Supervisor should contact the Placement co-ordinator immediately, and notify the student of this action, if this is thought to be a requirement. It will be necessary for the Placement Supervisor to indicate clearly the reasons for termination etc. The placement will be terminated immediately by the Technological University, who have responsibility to counsel the student in such situations.

### **APPEALS PROCESS**

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Should the student profoundly disagree with the decisions and opinions of the Placement Supervisor, Placement co-ordinator and Head of Department of Bioveterinary and Microbial Sciences, a written appeal can be made to the Registrar of the Technological University who will discuss the case with the Academic Board of the Technological University before making a final recommendation to QQI.

### **DISCRIMINATION, BULLYING & HARASSMENT**

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The learning environment, including placement, should be one which is grounded on a deep respect for the human person, irrespective of ethnic, gender or religious differences and firmly opposed to all kinds of discrimination, bullying and harassment. Discrimination, bullying and harassment can take on many forms including sexual harassment which is defined in the National Code of Practice as follows: "Any act or conduct including spoken words, gestures; the production, display, circulation of written words, pictures or other materials, constituting harassment of the victim and can reasonably be regarded as offensive, humiliating or intimidation".

Any student or placement supervisor wishing to make a complaint should take the following steps: adopting the informal option, the person or persons who are allegedly responsible for the harassment/bullying should be told, in a non- conflictive manner, to immediately cease any such actions or conduct. If the student does not feel confident in speaking to the alleged harasser/bully, he/she should check the practice policy regarding such matters and ask someone of trust at the practice to speak to the alleged harasser.

If the alleged harasser does not stop or the student is not comfortable with pursuing the first two options, they can make a formal complaint to the Head of Department or other designate (placement co-ordinator) where all complaints will be dealt with seriously and treated with sensitivity. However, if the complaint is found to be unwarranted or malicious, disciplinary action may be taken. The alleged culprit is entitled to representation, to a fair and impartial hearing, and to the right to challenge the complaint, as outlined in the National Code of Practice.

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## **DATA PROTECTION NOTICES – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY**

### **PERSONAL DATA - PRIVACY NOTICE - STUDENT**

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*Technological University of the Shannon has a data protection policy which governs how we handle personal data. We also have a student privacy policy. Both are available on the Technological University of the Shannon website at [www.ait.ie/gdpr](http://www.ait.ie/gdpr). Please ensure that you familiarise yourself with these documents. For your placement Technological University of the Shannon will share your Name, and details relevant to your programme of study, with your placement supervisor. Your student task list may contain details of previous placements and this information will be visible to your current placement supervisor. For Health and Safety purposes it will be necessary to inform your placement provider of any medical issues or dietary requirements you have which may affect you during your placement. You are requested to advise you placement lecturer of any relevant issues in advance of going on placement.*

### **PERSONAL DATA - PRIVACY NOTICE – EXTERNAL PLACEMENT SUPERVISOR**

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*Please refer to your Data Sharing agreement with Technological University of the Shannon. Should you have any queries in relation to this, please contact the Information and Compliance office at 090 6468009 or [dp@ait.ie](mailto:dp@ait.ie).*

## DATA SHARING AGREEMENT

This is an agreement is made between Technological University of the Shannon, University Road, Athlone, Co. Westmeath and The Placement Provider indicating acceptance the terms and conditions of the agreement, hereafter known as 'The Parties'.

### 1. PURPOSE OF AGREEMENT AND LAWFUL BASIS

1.1 This agreement relates to the sharing of personal data in order to administer the provision of student placement in line with Technological University of the Shannon Placement Policies and procedures. Protection of the vital interests of the data subject or another person, apply as lawful bases for the sharing of the following personal data:

1.1.1 Student Name and Surname

1.1.2 Special Needs or Disability – where appropriate

1.1.3 Garda Vetting Results (if course requirement)

### 2. DATA BREACH

2.1 The placement provider shall notify the Technological University of the Shannon Information and Data Compliance officer at [dp@ait.ie](mailto:dp@ait.ie) or the Technological University of the Shannon placement officer in relation to any actual or potential data breaches as soon as possible (and in any event within 48 hours) to enable consideration of what further action is required.

2.2 The placement provider agrees to provide prompt and reasonable assistance to facilitate the efficient handling of any Personal Data Breach.

### 3. LAW AND JURISDICTION

3.1 This Agreement is governed by, and shall be construed in accordance with, the laws of Ireland. The courts of Ireland have exclusive jurisdiction to hear and decide any suit, action or proceedings, and to settle any disputes, which may arise out of or in connection with this Agreement and, for these purposes, each party irrevocably submits to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of Ireland.

### 4. CONFIDENTIALITY AND SECURITY

4.1 The Parties shall treat all Personal Data confidentially and ensure that only authorised individuals have access to the Personal Data and that a record of such individuals be maintained.

4.1.1 The Parties shall ensure that all documentation is stored carefully in locked filing cabinets or accessed through secure databases.

4.1.2 The placement provider shall dispose of the Personal Data (in accordance with agency data retention policy).

4.1.3 The Parties agree that any information (written, verbal, or other form) obtained during the period of the placement term must remain confidential. This includes all information about the students, their families, other providers, and Technological University of the Shannon staff and organisations, as well as any information otherwise marked or known to be confidential.