

## Essential Functions for the Veterinary Technician Program

The field of veterinary technology is both intellectually and physically challenging. To be a safe and competent practitioner in this field the student must have abilities and skills in five different areas. These essential functions reflect the requirements of veterinary technicians operating in the workplace. The list of essential functions below is illustrative and may not be inclusive of all of the abilities that the veterinary technician must demonstrate.

The applicant must meet/demonstrate certain essential skills as outlined below. Every student admitted to the Veterinary Technician Program, will be held to the same standards and must be able to perform specific essential functions with or without reasonable accommodation(s).

### **I. Observation Skills/Sensory Abilities:**

A student must be able to observe an animal patient from a distance and in close proximity to acquire skills and gather data. Students must possess functional use of the senses that permit such observation.

Students must possess sufficient sensory, visual, hearing and tactile skills to independently and safely perform clinical skills.

#### **Such skills include but may not be limited to:**

**Tactile:** (i.e. possess tactile ability sufficient for physical assessment, and to perform nursing duties in a timely manner)

- Feel vibrations (i.e. palpate pulses)
- Feel differences in shapes and size (i.e. palpate bladders)
- Administer oral, IM, SQ and IV medications, insert and remove tubes
- Detect temperature (on patient)
- Feel differences in surface characteristics
- Must carry out all skills necessary for diagnostic and clinical procedures and safely operate equipment and instruments.

**Visual:** (i.e. patient observation including data collection, patient assessment, recognition of nonverbal behaviors, read instructions, make entries on medical record, safely utilize equipment)

- See objects up to 20 inches away
- See objects up to 20 feet away
- Use depth perception (size, shape and texture), including differentiation of details as viewed through a microscope)
- Use peripheral vision
- Distinguish color and color intensity
- Must be able to read instruments, charts, and graphs.
- Prepare and maintain medical records, recognize emergencies, read medication orders, read medication measurements, assess patient physical conditions, and read and document information in both written and computerized formats.

**Hearing:** (i.e. assess patient status, communicate findings, use equipment)

- Hearing normal speaking level sounds
- Hear faint vocalizations
- Hear faint body sounds
- Hear auditory alarms (on monitoring equipment); must be sufficient to monitor and assess health status, including auscultation of heart and lungs and hear equipment alarms and warning sounds from animals and humans of impending danger or injury.

**Smell:** (i.e. detect patient abnormalities, detect equipment malfunction)

- Detect odors from patient
- Detect gases or noxious smells

In addition, the student must be able to have sustained contact with multiple species of animals and the environments in which they are housed and treated. During such contact, the individual must be able to carry out routine medical care on such animals. An individual should not be allergic to domestic animals to the extent that would prohibit working in a facility that has them.

## **II. Communication**

Students must be able to read, write, and speak in English, with accuracy, efficiency, sensitivity and clarity. They must be able to accurately communicate findings orally and in writing to record these findings in the medical record. Students must use correct grammar, punctuation and spelling.

**Communication skills must be sufficient to allow:**

- Teaching clients about health care issues; verbally communicate in a clear and easily understood manner
- Explain procedures to clients
- Give oral reports and instructions
- Communicate effectively, accurately, and respectfully with colleagues in order to elicit information
- Speak on the telephone
- Direct the activities of others
- Convey information through writing (i.e. medical record/progress reports, regulatory logs)

## **III. Psychomotor Skills and Mobility:**

Students must have sufficient motor capacities and mobility to execute the various tasks and physical maneuvers that are required within the program and that are required of veterinary technicians in the workplace. Some of these skills are outlined below:

**Gross Motor Skills:**

- Move within confined spaces (i.e. retrieve animal patients)
- Operate on uneven surfaces that are both elevated and on the floor level
- Sit or stand and maintain balance for at least one hour (i.e. work with animal patients)
- Reach above and below shoulders
- Stoop and squat (i.e. animal restraint)

**Fine Motor Skills:**

- Pick up objects with hands
- Grasp small objects with hands
- Be able to manipulate objects with fingers (i.e. dials, IV lines, syringes, catheters, common surgical instruments.....)
- Be able to administer medications safely and accurately.

**Physical Endurance and Strength:**

- Push/Pull/Lift 50 pounds (up to 100 lbs with assistance) (i.e. animal restraint)
- Use upper body strength (i.e. animal restraint, CPR)
- Stand on their feet for periods in excess of one hour
- Ambulate on uneven surfaces

**Mobility/Flexibility:**

- Be able to twist, bend, kneel, reach (above and below the shoulders) and squat; capable of handling, positioning and restraining live animals of small and large species
- Move quickly toward or away from an object
- Ability to reach equipment, patient supplies, respond to emergency situations in a timely manner.
- Walk

**IV. Professional and Social Attributes:**

Students must possess sufficient interpersonal skills to develop rapport and positive working relationships with a wide variety of clients, instructors, and colleagues.

Individuals must be able to safely, patiently, compassionately and effectively interact with animal patients.

Students must be able to complete required tasks/functions under stressful conditions; the student must be able to learn to respond with precise, quick and appropriate actions in emergency situations and be able to learn to perform under stress when confronted with emergency, critical or unusual situations in which working speed and sustained attention are critical.

Students must be able to tolerate physically and mentally taxing workloads, function effectively under stress, adapt to changing environments, display flexibility and function in the face of uncertainties in the clinical setting.

When confronted with interpersonal conflict, the student should have enough self-reflective ability to acknowledge, evaluate and respond appropriately to resolve the conflict.

Students must demonstrate socially appropriate behavior; maintain cleanliness and personal grooming consistent with close human and animal contact.

**Some skills that are required to achieve the aforementioned functions:****Interpersonal Skills:**

- Negotiate interpersonal conflict effectively, appropriately and professionally
- Respect differences in client and colleagues
- Establish a positive rapport with clients, colleagues and patient
- Exercise good judgement in interacting with colleagues and patients

**Emotional Stability:**

- Adapt to changing environments/status/stress
- Deal with the unexpected (client, colleague and patient)
- Maintain focus on the task at hand
- Monitor own emotions while maintaining ability to function safely and effectively in a clinical setting (with respect to animals and people)
- Multitask
- Handle strong emotions
- Demonstrate compassion and patience with ALL animal patients
- Effectively and safely deal with uncooperative, aggressive and dangerous animal patients

**Professionalism and Ethics:**

- Practice in a compassionate and ethical manner
- Adhere to professional/legal ethical standards of the veterinary profession
- Demonstrate accountability for one's own practice
- Act as an advocate for our animal patients

**V. Intellectual and Cognitive Abilities:**

Students must maintain (academic) good standing in the program; this includes the following:

- Maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.5
- Receive a "C" or better in all veterinary core courses

Students must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate, remember and apply information. They must be able to demonstrate creative problem solving ability and effectively apply clinical reasoning.

Students must be able to progress toward minimal supervision as they advance through the program.

**The following skills are considered essential functions:**

- Reading (read and understand written documents)
- Ability to write clearly and accurately in English (see II)
- Arithmetic competence (computation, graphical interpretation, calibration, measurement, conversion)
- Capability to think analytically (problem solve, analyze, evaluate and weigh outcomes, anticipate outcomes, identify cause/effect relationships, planning, apply clinical information, make clinically appropriate decisions, evaluate information and interpret findings)

Students receiving accommodations for classes or for any other program related purpose must report the accommodation to the Program Director, after contacting Disability Support Services prior to the start of each semester. It is the student responsibility to notify the Veterinary Technician Program of any necessary accommodation for disability.