

## *4<sup>th</sup> Year Hours Guideline Document*

The clinical year of the DVM program consists of 32 weeks of rotation. These rotation experiences are approved by the college to provide you with exposure to clinical material you have discussed in years 1-3 courses. You will find the clinical year to be a challenge. You will be taking material that you have learned in its “textbook presentation” and learning to recognize it in your patients. You will be learning to communicate with colleagues and clients in formal and informal manners. You will experience difficult conversations and rewarding outcomes.

Your veterinary career will be as individual as each of you and your clinical year is a chance to expose you to all aspects of your possible future. The veterinary profession is a career requiring life-long learning. The DVM program will give you the tools to start your career as a successful veterinarian as you continue to grow and learn within the profession.

As a veterinarian, you will be part of a team caring for your patients. Your clinical year will allow you to experience all of the roles you may play as a DVM and those of the people who will eventually report to you. These experiences are to engage your learning from all levels and ensure that you are aware of the outcomes of your decisions. Every member of the team is valued and needed.

The role and hours of a small animal emergency veterinarian in a large city vary from those of a dermatologist, a rural mixed animal practitioner, or a pathologist, to name just a few. The primary mission of the DVM curriculum at the WCVN is to prepare you for entry-level clinical practice in all common disciplines and species. To that end, you will experience these variations of hours and responsibilities as you move through your core and elective rotations. You will need to adapt and adjust to the rotation expectations, as you will through the rest of your career.

There has been an increasing focus over the past several years to move toward clarity of expectation of hours within all professional colleges. In 2011, the Students of the American Veterinary Medical Association (SAVMA) created a Duty Hours guideline, which was revised in 2019. (<https://www.avma.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/2019-SAVMA-Duty-Hours-Guidelines.pdf>) The WCVN has been working with rotation instructors on an individual basis to move towards clarity on hourly expectations for students in our program. In continuation of this work, the following guidelines will be implemented within 4<sup>th</sup> year rotations, effective April 24, 2023.

## Clinical year Rotation Guidelines:

### **WCVI Students will:**

Participate in the DVM clinical rotations for no more than 80 hours per week, averaged over the course of the rotation, including any on call requirements. This does not include preparation for rounds, NAVLE or other required preparatory work.

Excuse themselves from rotation at an appropriate time for regular meal breaks. During these breaks, students will communicate with their supervisors as to their intention to take their break and expected return.

Complete medical records and treatments in a timely manner, according to hospital policy, SVMA or other regulatory requirements. Students will act with professionalism and collegiality as members of the health care team for their patients and clients.

Participate in after-hours duties as assigned on the rotation. Students may be required to stay in student residence in the Veterinary Medical Centre or be available to attend cases within 15 minutes of notification while on call. Regular and after hours duties will not exceed 24 hours of continuous awake time while providing patient care. If a student has been awake on clinics for 24 hours, they must notify their supervising clinician, and ensure transfer of patient care duties before leaving the hospital. The minimum rest period provided after 24 hours of continuous time spent providing patient care will be 8 hours. If not called in for a case, this time does not constitute being on continuous duty and will not result in a student being excused for rest after 24 hours. This time would however, count towards the maximum of 80 hours per week averaged over the course of the rotation.

Note: If an individual student desires to do more on call duty or time in clinics than would be required under this policy, they may volunteer to do so, assuming that all other students on the rotation meet the minimum on call and clinical duty requirements. This additional voluntary time on call or providing patient care will not count towards the maximum of 80 hours per week (in other words, the 80 hour limit will not apply to these students). Rotation coordinators or senior clinicians will make decisions regarding extra on call assignments for students who request them, in consultation with the Associate Dean of Clinical Programs.

**VMC Team Members will:**

Acknowledge student requests for breaks. If the time requested is not appropriate, an alternative time will be suggested, but breaks will be provided. At a minimum, breaks will consist of one 30 minute meal break and two 15 minute “coffee” breaks per shift.

Acknowledge students request to leave after 24 hours continuous duty. The senior clinician will communicate expectations required to transfer cases and maintain patient safety prior to the student leaving for their 8-hour rest period. Expectations regarding return to duty will also be communicated to the student.

Ensure all schedules for their particular rotation are communicated to students in a timely manner so they may arrange for their responsibilities outside of school. This will vary between rotations; some provide the students with a schedule prior to the beginning of the rotation, while others require the students to build their own schedules as a group on each rotation block.

**Standard Rotation Expectations:**

All rotation shifts will start by 7:00 am and continue until 7:00 pm, with the exception of the first day of rotation, unless otherwise communicated. During these hours, students are expected to complete their medical records, treatments and appointments. As students become familiar with the expectations of case management throughout the year, time management will improve.

Please note: Rotation hours differ significantly between services. The default of 7:00 am – 7:00 pm is the maximum length of any shift in the clinical year, excluding exceptional circumstances and on call hours. Each service will inform students of the typical hours for their rotation prior to the first day on that service.

Treatments for hospitalized patients must be completed by the start of the rotation day (or as specified by the individual services in their rotation descriptions and orientation material).

On call duties will be shared among students and may result in extended hours on any given day for those students on call.

Rotations within the Veterinary Medical Centre end at midnight on the last day of each rotation (typically Sunday unless the following Monday is a statutory holiday, in which case the rotation ends midnight Monday). Rotations begin at 8:00 am Monday morning (unless Monday is a statutory holiday, in which case the rotation begins on Tuesday morning). This ensures a minimum of 8 hours without patient care or on-call responsibilities between rotations.

## **\*\* Exceptions to the Rotation Guidelines**

There are certain unique circumstances within the fourth year curriculum where the student hours guidelines will not be met. Specific examples include:

1. External Rotations and Externships: As all external rotations and externships are chosen by the student and are elective, the hours of activity expected of students at external sites is at the discretion of the supervisor of record. WCVM will provide our hours guidelines to external hosts for information purposes only if requested.
2. Special circumstances with internal rotations: There will be some rotations, or segments of rotations, in which the hours guidelines cannot apply due to the nature of the activity. Some examples include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Sled Dog Rotation. This experience involves attendance at, and clinical duty as part of the animal care team for the Northern Challenge sled dog race. The hours are very long, including through the night, in often challenging conditions.
  - b. Small Ruminant Rotation. This rotation involves some long distance travel to visit production facilities and other sites in Western Canada, particularly Alberta. These parts of the rotation involve long days and will not necessarily adhere to the guidelines.
  - c. Remote Clinical Practice. The days spent in La Ronge or Ile La Crosse doing elective surgeries and wellness appointments are very long, as are travel days.
  - d. Similar situations will arise on other internal rotations. Students will be informed about exceptional hours commitment for any rotation that may fall outside of these guidelines in the VINT 580 handbook and/or in rotation descriptions offered in person to each class during Year 3 of the DVM program in preparation for the 4<sup>th</sup> year draft.

## **Illness, Medical or other Appointments, etc.**

If you become ill while on rotation, stay home. It is crucial that you inform the senior clinician working with you on your rotation of your illness before your shift begins. If you have patients in the hospital, it is also vital that you inform your classmates who are on the rotation with you, and ask them to help with any treatments that you will be unable to perform. In the case of illness, fill out an excused absence form and send it to the senior clinician, and to Student Services (Student Services Manager, Curriculum Manager and Associate Dean, Clinical Programs). The Associate Dean, Clinical Programs provides final approval for all absences in the clinical year.

If you have a medical, dental or other health related appointment, use the excused absence process as described above. If possible, try to avoid booking appointments on the first day of a rotation, or during scheduled rounds hours etc. If you have ongoing repeated health related appointments, you may schedule them in advance with the approval of the Associate Dean,

Clinical Programs, and send your appointment schedule to each rotation affected as you move through your clinical year.

Examples of absence requests that will **not** be approved include job interviews, weddings, attendance at conferences (unless you are a presenter or the conference constitutes part of your rotation), etc. Absences due to family emergencies are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, but are generally approved.

If you are ill or injured such that you cannot participate in rotations for a prolonged period, there is a Medical Leave policy available to you. Should you find yourself in this situation, the Associate Dean, Clinical Programs and Student Services will explain your options to you under the policy.

Please note: any excused absence may require you to make up some or all of the lost time on rotation. The requirement to make up time is considered on a case-by-case basis, in collaboration with the senior clinicians from the rotation on which the absence occurred to ensure that all rotation competencies are met and students can be assessed on their performance appropriately and equitably.

#### **Reporting non-compliance with Student Hours Guidelines:**

Students who feel that they are not being treated in accordance with these guidelines must advocate for themselves. It is recommended that you inform the senior clinician on rotation with you, and/or the rotation coordinator, of your concerns. At the same time, please inform the Associate Dean, Clinical Programs, and/or Manager, Curriculum and Manager, Student Services. If the concern can be addressed between the student and the clinicians at a local level, no further action is required. If this is not successful, the concern will be investigated by the larger group by discussing the issues with the student and others who may be involved. The student will have input on the process taken to address the concerns unless an immediate safety risk is identified and mitigation must be done urgently. If a student is reluctant to report on their own, they should seek help from student leadership within the class to bring the concern forward. Anonymous reports will be accepted, but are difficult to act upon other than to be taken as information.