

Frequently Asked Questions for Level 3 Veterinary Nursing course at CAFRE - Greenmount Campus - September 2026 intake

Q1. When can I apply for the course?

Applications open on 1st October for the following academic year. Applications close on 30th June. The course starts in early September.

Q2. What are the entry criteria?

Applicants at the time of entry to the course must: Hold at least five GCSE passes at Grade C or above including English Language, Mathematics and a Science subject. If places are oversubscribed the minimum entry criteria may be enhanced and date of application may be considered.

- Be at least 16 years old on or before 1st July in the year in which they wish to enrol.
- Be employed in an approved veterinary practice
- Applicants should also demonstrate that they have gained a minimum of three months or 400 hours experience of working in a veterinary practice before commencing the course.

Q3. How do I apply?

All applicants must complete online application, details on this and the link to apply can be found on the [CAFRE website](#).

Q4. How many places are on the course?

25 places are available each September for new students.

Q5. How long is the course?

The course is 2-2.5 years. Students attend college 1 day per week from September to June and work the remainder of the week in their approved training practice as a Student Veterinary Nurse.

Q6. Where do I find more information about CAFRE Approved Training Practices?

A list of current approved veterinary training practices in Northern Ireland can be found by clicking [here](#).

Q7. What if I do not live in Northern Ireland?

As applicants need to become employed by the approved training practice as a Student Nurse then may require their staff to be located close to work for on-call duties. CAFRE has no approved practices outside Northern Ireland.

Q8. What if I did my qualifications outside the UK or ROI?

Applicants from ROI must forward to greenmount.admissions@daera-ni.gov.uk their Leaving Certificate results. Student who gained their qualifications from outside the UK or ROI will need to obtain a Statement of comparability from www.naric.org.uk. The applicant will incur a cost for this Statement.

Q9. Will I need my exam certificates?

Yes, applicants can upload their GCSE certificates while completing the online application for this course. If you are applying early and do not yet have your results, this will be noted in the application. An administrative staff member will contact you via email to request your certificates once you have received your GCSE results.

Q10. Who are the RCVS?

The RCVS regulates the Veterinary Nursing profession through the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, the Royal Charter and the Veterinary Nurse Conduct and Discipline Rules 2014 to protect the public interest and to safeguard animal health and welfare. The RCVS expects all Student Veterinary Nurses to have met minimum essential competences and skills when they apply to register.

Q11. Will I need to do another course to be able to work as a Registered Veterinary nurse?

No. To practice as a veterinary nurse in the UK, you must hold a qualification accredited by the RCVS. The Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing at CAFRE is RCVS accredited. Once you are qualified, you will be able to register with the RCVS as a Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN).

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is an essential part of ongoing RCVS membership- **you'll be required to complete 15 hours of CPD per year.**

Q12. If I complete this course, can I apply to study Veterinary medicine (train as a Vet)?

Training and working as a Vet is a very different career choice than training as a Veterinary Nurse. There is no link between Veterinary Nursing training and the necessary course to qualify as a Vet.

Q13. I love working with animals is this the right course for me?

As a veterinary nurse, you will be involved in hands-on nursing care of a range of animals, providing both emergency and routine healthcare. You will work alongside veterinary surgeons to promote animal health and welfare through responsible ownership and play a key role in the education of pet owners.

This CAFRE course will train you to work with small animals only (dogs, cats, rabbits and guinea pigs). Farm animals, large animals and horses will not be covered.

As a veterinary nurse, you'll need to:

- Confidently handle and restrain animals.

- Provide nursing care to hospitalised patients, including patient monitoring and health checking, feeding, grooming and walking animals.
- Administer treatments including injections, tablets, drips and blood transfusions.
- Perform diagnostic tests, e.g. blood sampling, urine analysis and x-rays
- Prepare animals for surgery and perform some minor procedures, e.g. suturing wounds and dental hygiene.
- Monitor anaesthesia.
- Assist veterinary surgeons with operations.
- Maintain the cleanliness and hygiene of the practice.
- Communicate with pet owners, gaining their trust and reassuring them about their animal's treatment.
- Educate pet owners on animal health, including vaccinations, worming, flea prevention and appropriate nutrition.
- Support student veterinary nurses undertaking placements
- Work to the professional code of conduct.
- As a nurse working in a referral or emergency practice, you may specialise in one of these areas, depending on the practice and your own interests.

Q14. What subjects should I pick at GCSE to improve my chance of getting on the course?

Applicants must have at least 5 GCSE/Level 2 equivalents which must include Maths, English and Science.

Q15. Are there any Open Days on the campus?

Normally CAFRE holds Open Days at Greenmount Campus, Antrim in the spring and autumn. Details regarding Open Days or their alternatives will be posted on the website: www.cafre.ac.uk.

Q16. What training pathways can I consider to become a Registered Veterinary Nurse?

To train as Veterinary Nurse you can choose from two possible study routes:

- A Foundation Degree (FdSc) in Veterinary Nursing or a Bachelor's Degree (BSc) in Veterinary Nursing at University.
- Level 3 work-based Diploma in Veterinary Nursing at CAFRE or local Further Education College.

Q17. How do I get a placement with a practice?

Securing this work experience/placement will be challenging. Due to the popularity of this career, there is a lot of competition. Applicants need to allow time to source and carry out your work experience and you should be prepared to approach several practices. Speaking directly to a veterinary nurse/Practice Manager at the practice may be more successful than simply emailing your request.

The work experience for the CAFRE course can be gained 1 day per week over 1 year or a block of week/months. Work experience gained in a dog groomers, animal shelter etc will not be eligible towards the 3 months work experience necessary to apply for this course.

Q18. How are applicants shortlisted for the course if it is oversubscribed?

Applicants will be allocated a place based on the points achieved at GCSE/Level 2 equivalents. It is important you provide evidence of all certificates for qualifications to be considered as part of the application process.

Q19. Is there financial support to help with the course fees?

There are no course fees. There are fees for registering with the RCVS and exam resits which are generally paid by your placement provider.

Q20. Are there useful websites I can view that can help with my research about this career?

<http://www.rcvs.org.uk>

<https://animalowners.rcvs.org.uk/veterinary-careers/i-want-to-be-a-veterinary-nurse>

www.bvna.org.uk/

Q21. Do I need to complete the Level 2 Animal Nursing course at CAFRE first?

Not necessarily. Some Veterinary practices prefer to enrol a student on the Level 2 course first to observe them working in practice and determine how suitable a candidate they are for the Level 3 course. The CAFRE **Level 2 Veterinary Care Support** will also count toward a GCSE Science for progression onto the CAFRE Level 3 course.

Q22. How will I be assessed on the course?

Modules are assessed through online multiple-choice examinations, written assignments and an online E-Portfolio. The final assessed component of the course is clinical examinations (OSCE), which will take place **once a year** in NI and **multiple times a year** in GB.

Only when all components of the course are successfully completed, are individuals eligible to join the Register of Veterinary Nurses. To become a registered Veterinary Nurse students must successfully complete both the clinical and college-based components of the course.

Q23. Do I get paid for working in a Veterinary practice?

CAFRE policy asks training practices to ensure Level 3 students are paid during their employment in practice.