School of Veterinary Science Student Code of Professional Conduct

As a part of your learning, you will have privileged access to client information. The trust that people place in veterinary professionals carries considerable responsibility and expectations regarding your behaviour. It is important that you are aware of these responsibilities and expectations from the beginning of your training. Any breach of these expectations could result in serious repercussions for you, your education and your later career. Massey University is committed to support you to uphold this Code and to assist you throughout your studies, and encourages you to know where and how to access available support services.

You should think of yourself as a veterinary professional-in-training, rather than as a student in theoretical studies. Though the your involvement with animals, clients and the wider community may initially be limited, from now on you will be meeting people as part of your education as a veterinary professional. As you progress through your training you will be increasingly part of the veterinary health care team. Whenever you meet people in this capacity, you represent the School of Veterinary Science, and the veterinary and allied veterinary professions. Your behaviour both within and outside the university environment, including your personal life, may have an impact on your fitness to practise. Your behaviour should justify the trust the public places in the veterinary profession. The following principles therefore, apply right from the start.

We ask that you read through these principles and sign this document, acknowledging your agreement to comply with them. This form must be signed before you can begin your veterinary education.

Notes:

1. These standards apply when using electronic communications. Special care is required to ensure client confidentiality. Caution is necessary when sharing your own personal information on social networking sites.

2. The term ‘will’ is used to indicate that the associated statement sets a minimum standard that is expected of all veterinary students. The term ‘should’ is more aspirational and reflects a standard that the School of Veterinary Science aims to promote and nurture, and students should aim to meet.

3. This code applies in New Zealand and overseas, and also applies to overseas veterinary science and veterinary technology (henceforth, referred to as ‘veterinary’) students in New Zealand.

A. Interactions with animals and their owners

1. Respecting animals and their owners:

As a veterinary student, I will:

1.1. Respect the dignity and maintain the welfare of patients and clients.

1.2. Understand my own values and beliefs, and manage their possible influence on my interactions with animals and their owners.

1.3. Not impose my own cultural values, beliefs and practices on clients or discriminate against any person on the basis (for example) of age, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, creed, political affiliation, economic, social, or health status.

1.4. Respect the autonomy of clients.
1.5. Treat clients, colleagues and co-workers politely and considerately.

1.6. Ensure my appearance and dress are appropriate to enable effective and respectful interaction with clients whilst providing effective protection to maintain hygiene and biosecurity (particularly from zoonotic diseases).

1.7. Respect the needs and values of clients.

2. Not exploiting clients and their animals:
As a veterinary student I will:

2.1. Not abuse the generosity of clients in my pursuit of learning but place concerns for their own and their animals’ wellbeing above all else.

3. Obtaining informed consent:
While your clinical supervisor is responsible for obtaining consent for your interaction with patients, in many circumstances you may still need to ask owners for their permission for interaction with them and their animals.

As a veterinary student I will:

3.1. Clearly inform clients of my role and the purpose and nature of any proposed interaction with them.

3.2. Ask clients if they have any questions and, if I am unable to answer them or it would be inappropriate for me to answer them, refer the questions to my clinical supervisor.

3.3. Check if clients are satisfied with the information, request their consent, and ensure that consent is given freely and without coercion.

3.4. Make a special effort to assist the client to reach the necessary level of understanding.

4. Appreciating the limits of my role:
As a veterinary student I will:

4.1. Acknowledge the level of my skills, experience and knowledge, and not represent myself as more competent or qualified than I am and correct any such misunderstandings that arise.

4.2. Not give advice or provide information to clients, family members or the general public, which is beyond my level of knowledge and expertise. When asked for such comment, I will direct that person to an appropriate professional.

4.3. Not initiate any form of treatment, except in an emergency where no-one more able or qualified is available to provide timely intervention and recognising the limits of my own knowledge and skills.

4.4. When otherwise approached for assistance, recommend that people seek appropriate professional help.

B. Personal and professional values

5. Maintaining patient confidentiality:
Client and patient information is confidential. Disclosure without clients’ permission or other legally acceptable justification is inconsistent with the trust required in veterinary practice and has the potential to cause harm.
Patient information may be discussed with peers and professional staff who are directly involved in the care of that patient, and on occasion, with colleagues in a setting where confidentiality is protected.

As a veterinary student I will:

5.1. Hold all patient information in confidence, including after patients have ended treatment or died.

5.2. Respect clients’ right to determine who should be provided with their personal information.

5.3. Not remove or copy patient-related material without specific permission, and handle such material in accordance with 5.4.

5.4. Ensure that all my documents and images containing patient information are de-identified, kept in a secure place in a way that prevents unauthorised access, and securely destroyed when no longer required.

5.5. Seek advice from a senior clinical supervisor or senior academic when I suspect that it may be necessary or appropriate to breach confidentiality (usually when animal or human welfare is at risk).

5.6. Not access patient information unless I am involved in their care, or have a legitimate reason and permission from those authorised to give such permission.

6. Researching ethically:
As a veterinary student undertaking or associated with research activities I will:

6.1. Adhere to the Codes of Ethical Conduct for research and teaching at Massey University.

7. Maintaining personal well-being:
As a veterinary student I will:

7.1. Acknowledge that my physical and mental health impacts on my ability to function in my role with clients, peers and staff, and in the event of illness or impairment that interferes with this role, I will seek appropriate assistance and notify the Academic Dean, Associate Dean (Students and Admissions), Programme Lead (in the case of BVetTech students) or Undergraduate Office.

7.2. Maintain my own wellbeing to the level that ensures I can carry out my role.

7.3. Remain aware of the wellbeing of my peers, and support them, to the extent that I am able, to seek help when needed.

C. Relationships with staff and colleagues

8. Respecting staff and colleagues:
As a veterinary student I will:

8.1. Show respect to all other members of the veterinary health care team.

8.2. Show respect to teaching and non-teaching staff.

8.3. Not exploit my peers, or others, in a vulnerable or more junior position to myself.

8.4. Hold in confidence information about my peers gathered in learning situations, but recognise that there are circumstances in which breaches of confidentiality to appropriate persons, may be justified, such as circumstances that would negatively impact animal or human health or welfare. In
such circumstances, I will seek appropriate advice from the Academic Dean, Associate Dean (Students and Admissions), Programme Lead (in the case of BVetTech students) or Undergraduate Office

D. Commitment to professional standards and continuing improvement in self and others

9. Holding a positive attitude to learning:
As a veterinary student I will:

9.1. Commit to continued learning and the development of skills.

9.2. Recognise that my learning needs are valid and important.

9.3. Be prepared to seek and respond to constructive feedback on my own performance.

9.4. Recognise where barriers exist for learning opportunities, identify these, and notify my academic supervisor.

9.5. Act with integrity in all learning and assessment situations.

9.6. Not plagiarise another’s work or research and will abide by the plagiarism and dishonest practice policies of the University.

9.7. Show respect in working with cadavers and animal tissue.

As a veterinary student I should:

9.8. Care for my peers, provide support in learning opportunities, and work collaboratively and respectfully in all situations.

9.9. Be prepared, when called upon, to provide constructive feedback to my peers on their performance.

9.10. Make the most of educational and clinical opportunities to extend my knowledge and further my skills with appropriate support and supervision.

10. Accepting wider professional responsibilities:
Veterinary professionals have a responsibility to the profession and to the public to maintain high standards of care; this wider responsibility is over and above individual responsibility for their own clinical competence.

As a veterinary student, I will:

10.1. Report matters of serious concern in a professional manner, including those which may impact on immediate patient safety, to those with the authority to act.

10.2. Not use social networking sites or public forums to raise concerns about an individual.

10.3. Not exploit my role as a veterinary student for personal gain.

10.4 Give judicious, constructive evaluation and feedback, as appropriate, on veterinary education programmes.

10.5. Be aware that alcohol and substance misuse may impact on health and fitness to practise, and may cross the boundaries of legality, which becomes a professional conduct issue.
I have read the School of Veterinary Science Student Code of Professional Conduct and I agree to comply with it.

I agree to familiarise myself with any subsequent revisions.

Family name: ______________________________________ (Block Letters)

Given name(s): ______________________________________

Date: ___________________ Student ID Number____________________

Signature: _________________________________

Acknowledgement: this document is based on the Code of Professional Conduct for Medical Students at the Universities of Auckland and Otago and is used with the permission of the Dean of the Otago Medical School.