

HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

VETERINARY ASSISTANT PROGRAM STUDENT HANDBOOK



Program & Contact Information

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- **Department:** Veterinary & Animal Science Department
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Program & Institutional Accreditation

Programmatic Approval

The Veterinary Assistant Certificate Program at Holyoke Community College is approved by the NAVTA Committee on Approved Veterinary Assistant Programs.

Institutional Accreditation

Holyoke Community College is accredited by the **New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE)** (formerly the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of NEASC).

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Table of Contents

Section I: General Program Overview	3
Welcome & Veterinary Assistant Oath	3
Welcome to the Veterinary Assistant Program!	3
How to Use This Handbook & Policy Disclaimers	3
The Veterinary Assistant Oath	3
Mission Statement & Statement on DEIB	4
Department Directory & Key Contacts	4
Institutional & Programmatic Accreditation	5
Introduction & Tradition of Excellence	5
Professional Roles & Clinical Scope of Practice	6
Section II: Technical Standards & Functional Abilities	6
Overview & Verification Policy	6
Disability Accommodations & Auxiliary Aids	7
Standard Technical Domains (Sensory, Psychomotor, Communication, Cognitive, Behavioral)	8
Section III: Admission Requirements & Application Process	11
Selective Admission Guidelines & Key Dates	11
Academic Prerequisites	11
Post-Acceptance Compliance & Health Requirements	12
Recommended Experience	12
Section IV: Health, Immunization & Background Check Compliance	12
Mandatory Health Insurance Policy	12
General State & Departmental Immunizations	13
Rabies Vaccination Policy & Mitigation Protocol	14
Vaccine Accommodations (Medical & Religious)	14
Criminal Background Checks (CORI/SORI)	15
Section V: Curriculum, Program Objectives & Program Costs	15
Program Objectives & Ultimate Outcomes	15
Terminology & Professional Titles	17
Associate in Science (A.S.) Degree Plan & Course Sequence	18
Year 1: Course Sequence	18
Year 2: Course Sequence	19
Estimated Expenses, Materials, & Program-Specific Fees	20
Section VI: Academic Standards, Grading & Progression Policies	21
Graduation Requirements	21
Written Assignment Standards (APA) & Academic Integrity	22
Grading Scale, Rounding, & Dual-Competency Policy (Lecture/Lab)	23
AVMA/CVTEA Essential Skills Completion & Remediation Policy	24
Progression, Course Repeat Limits, & Dismissal Criteria	25
Non-Negotiable Safety Violations	26
Credit Transfer, Withdrawals, & Program Reinstatement	27
Section VII: Professional Conduct, Confidentiality & Clinical Standards	29
Departmental Code of Conduct & NAVTA Ethics	29
Mandatory Patient & Client Confidentiality (Privacy Policy)	30
Institutional Email & Digital Platform (Canvas) Rules	30
Electronic Devices & Social Media Prohibitions	31
Dress Code, Personal Hygiene, & Clinical Attire	32
Attendance Policy & Weather Closings / Delay Guidelines	33
Section VIII: Clinical, Externship & Animal Handling Policies	34

Clinical Externships Overview (VEA 182 / VEA 183).....	34
Transportation & Liability Insurance Requirements.....	34
Biosecurity & Separate Scrub Attire Policy.....	34
Professional Conduct & Site Evaluations.....	35
Animal Restraint & Handling Safety Rules.....	35
Section IX: Occupational Safety & Environmental Health	36
Substance Abuse Policies & Federal DEA Regulations.....	36
Animal Bite Wounds, Scratches & Exposure Protocols.....	37
Pregnancy & Reproductive Health Policy.....	40
Laboratory, Chemical, Biological & Radiation Safety Guidelines.....	41
Section X: Emergency Preparedness & Animal Evacuation Protocols	41
Emergency Communication Infrastructure & Directory.....	41
Key Safety Infrastructure.....	41
Emergency Phone Directory.....	41
Emergency Notification System.....	42
Resident Teaching Animal Evacuation Protocols (By Species, Surgery, After-Hours, Escape).....	45
Section XI: Animal Welfare & IACUC Reporting Guidelines	46
Institutional Commitment to Humane Animal Care.....	46
Reporting Non-Compliance or Care Concerns.....	47
IACUC Contacts & Whistleblower Protections.....	47
Section XII: Student Support Services & Program Evaluation	48
Accessibility & Disability Services (OSDDs).....	48
Program Evaluation & Alumni/Employer Surveys.....	48
Scholarships, Recognition, & Awards.....	49
Comprehensive Student Support Resources.....	49
Appendix: AVMA-CVTEA Essential & Recommended Skills List	51
Appendix G – Veterinary Technology Student Essential and Recommended Skills List.....	51
Section XIII: Consolidated Program Waivers & Signature Forms	61
Statement of Understanding & Handbook Acknowledgment.....	61
Release, Hold Harmless, and Indemnification Agreement.....	61
Release and Waiver of Liability for Program Participation.....	62
Photo Release & Social Media Consent Form.....	63

Section I: General Program Overview

Welcome & Veterinary Assistant Oath

Welcome to the Veterinary Assistant Program!

On behalf of the dedicated faculty and staff at Holyoke Community College (HCC), welcome! We are thrilled that you have chosen HCC to pursue your passion and advance your career toward becoming a Credentialed Veterinary Assistant.

This Student Handbook is your essential roadmap. It outlines critical program expectations, clinical policies, academic progression rules, and student resources. Please read it thoroughly, keep it accessible throughout your studies, and refer back to it often.

How to Use This Handbook & Policy Disclaimers

- **Supplemental Guidance:** This handbook supplements the general HCC Student Handbook and the HCC Veterinary Assistant Program Website. You are responsible for knowing and adhering to the policies in all three resources.
- **Policy Updates:** College and program policies are reviewed regularly and subject to update. For the most up-to-date college-wide policies, always refer to the online version of the HCC Student Handbook at the following link: [HCC Student Handbook](#).
- **Questions & Support:** If you ever encounter a question or challenge not covered in these pages, please reach out directly to your academic advisor, the Vet Assistant Program Coordinator, or the Department Chair. We are here to support your success every step of the way!

The Veterinary Assistant Oath

"I solemnly dedicate myself to aiding animals and society by providing excellent care and services for animals, by alleviating animal suffering, and by promoting public health. I accept my obligations to practice my profession conscientiously and with sensitivity, adhering to the profession's Code of Ethics, and furthering my knowledge and competence through a commitment to lifelong learning."

Mission Statement & Statement on DEIB

Program Mission Statement

The mission of the Holyoke Community College (HCC) Veterinary Assistant Program is to equip graduates to become effective, knowledgeable, and compassionate members of veterinary medical teams across a variety of animal healthcare settings.

The HCC Veterinary Assistant Program is dedicated to preparing our students to deliver the highest quality entry-level care to animal patients, while instilling a commitment to ethics, professional excellence, and lifelong learning. In alignment with the overarching mission, philosophy, and goals of Holyoke Community College, we strive to foster an inclusive and supportive educational environment for all learners.

Statement on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB)

Creating socially conscious educational and work environments and removing barriers to equity and inclusion are imperatives for veterinary professionals. Veterinary professionals work in an increasingly diverse world. Veterinary assistants and students must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of all clients and to foster welcoming environments for all co-workers.

Education plays a pivotal role in the pursuit of more diverse and inclusive workplaces. The HCC Veterinary & Animal Science Department strives to provide all of its students, faculty, and staff with training and tools that will advance their knowledge and skills so that they can become better allies in support of equitable treatment for all.

Institutional Non-Discrimination Pledge

The HCC Veterinary & Animal Science Department pledges not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, age, veteran status, genetic information, gender identity, or sexual orientation in any of its programs and activities.

Department Directory & Key Contacts

Leadership & Full-Time Faculty

- **Shelly Yarnie, MPH** | *Dean of Health and Professional Studies*
 - Phone: 413-552-2288
 - Email: [Dean's Email]
- **Jennifer York, DVM** | *Chair, Department of Veterinary & Animal Science*
 - Phone: 413-552-2459
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- **Joshua Hatch, DVM** | *Faculty, Department of Veterinary & Animal Science*
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Staff & Program Coordination

- **Christine O'Neill, CVT, BSN** | *Department Laboratory Technician*
 - Phone: 413-552-2507
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- **Erin Jackson, M.Ed., CVT** | *Veterinary Assistant Certificate Program Coordinator & Faculty*
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Adjunct Faculty

- **Ashley Holden** | *Adjunct Faculty*
 - Email: aholden@hcc.edu

Contact Note: Email is the primary method of communication for faculty and staff. Students must use their official HCC student email account for all program correspondence to ensure security, privacy, and prompt communication. Please allow 24–48 business hours for a response.

Institutional & Programmatic Accreditation

- **Programmatic Accreditation:** The Veterinary Assistant Certificate Program at Holyoke Community College is approved by the NAVTA Committee on Approved Veterinary Assistant Programs.
- **Institutional Accreditation:** Holyoke Community College is accredited by the **New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE)** (*formerly the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of NEASC*).

Introduction & Tradition of Excellence

The National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) recognizes Approved Veterinary Assistants (AVAs) as essential members of the modern veterinary healthcare team. NAVTA strongly advocates for the integration of trained veterinary assistants to support veterinarians and veterinary technicians, ensuring efficient clinical operations and exceptional patient care.

As veterinary medicine continues to advance, the demand for educated support staff has grown significantly. Today's Veterinary Assistants perform critical operational and clinical tasks, from

handling safe animal restraint and preparing diagnostic samples to maintaining aseptic surgical environments and assisting with patient monitoring.

The Holyoke Community College (HCC) Veterinary Assistant Program provides rigorous, hands-on training aligned with national industry standards:

- **NAVTA Approval:** Program curriculum aligned with NAVTA Essential Skills
- **Credential Awarded:** Certificate of Completion upon finishing the one-year program

Professional Roles & Clinical Scope of Practice

Graduates of HCC's Veterinary Assistant program are trained to deliver support across clinical, administrative, and laboratory settings. Working directly under the supervision of Certified Veterinary Technicians (CVTs) and Veterinarians, the Veterinary Assistant functions as a patient handler, exam room aide, laboratory assistant, surgical prep assistant, and front-desk liaison.

Key Support Functions in Clinical Practice

- **Office & Hospital Operations:** Greeting clients, scheduling appointments, performing patient admission/discharge, managing electronic medical records, invoicing, phone triage for emergencies, and maintaining facility sanitation and inventory.
- **Patient Restraint & Exam Prep:** Applying safe patient restraint techniques, obtaining accurate patient histories, measuring vital signs (temperature, pulse, respiration), and performing basic treatments like nail trims.
- **Pharmacy & Inventory Support:** Reading prescriptions, packaging and labeling medications, reconstituting vaccines, recognizing drug classifications, and managing biological waste and inventory.
- **Patient Care & Nursing Support:** Monitoring hospitalized animals, administering oral and topical medications, performing ear cleanings and therapeutic baths, expressing anal glands externally, and providing compassionate post-mortem care.
- **Surgical Prep & Suite Maintenance:** Operating autoclaves, maintaining surgical logs, and assisting with post-operative patient monitoring.
- **Laboratory Diagnostics Support:** Collecting voided urine and fecal samples, setting up fecal flotations and blood microhematocrit tubes, identifying common external parasites, maintaining lab logs, and adhering to strict PPE and safety standards.
- **Diagnostic Imaging Assistance:** Utilizing radiation safety equipment (PPE), assisting with patient positioning for x-rays and ultrasound, maintaining diagnostic logs, and storing digital or film radiographs.

Beyond companion animal practices, trained veterinary assistants work in emergency and specialty referral hospitals, equine and large animal practices, animal shelters, wildlife centers, and research facilities.

Here is the tailored **Technical Standards & Functional Abilities** document for the Holyoke Community College (HCC) 1-Year Veterinary Assistant Certificate Program, adapted to match your Vet Tech section format while incorporating the U.S. Department of Labor O*NET Occupational Descriptor for Veterinary Assistants (Code 31-9096.00) and NAVTA Essential Skills guidelines.

Section II: Technical Standards & Functional Abilities

Overview & Verification Policy

The abilities and skills required to successfully complete the training associated with the Holyoke Community College (HCC) Veterinary Assistant Program are referred to as Technical Standards. These standards represent the essential physical, cognitive, sensory, and behavioral capabilities required for students to complete the curriculum, perform hands-on NAVTA essential skills, participate in clinical externships, and practice as safe, competent entry-level Veterinary Assistants.

HCC's Department of Veterinary and Animal Sciences has established these Technical Standards to balance several essential interests:

- **Student Rights:** Respecting the rights of applicants and enrolled students.
- **Safety First:** Ensuring the physical safety and well-being of students, co-workers, clinical supervisors, and animal patients.
- **Curricular Integrity:** Satisfying all required hands-on clinical training components established by our approving body, the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA).
- **Professional Credentialing:** Meeting national standards for professional practice as outlined by the U.S. Department of Labor at the following link: [O*NET Occupational Descriptor for Veterinary Assistants and Laboratory Animal Caretakers \(Code 31-9096.00\)](#).

Mandatory Verification & Progression Policy: Students must verify that they meet these Technical Standards immediately prior to matriculation into the Program and maintain them throughout their academic and clinical training. Students are obligated to immediately alert program faculty of any change in their ability to meet these standards. Students who cannot meet or maintain these standards, with or without reasonable accommodation, may be unable to complete required skills and will be at risk for dismissal from the Program.

Disability Accommodations & Auxiliary Aids

Applicants and enrolled students must be able to satisfy these Technical Standards with or without reasonable accommodations. The HCC Veterinary Assistant Program works closely with college accessibility staff to facilitate equal access and participation for qualified individuals with documented temporary or permanent disabilities.

- **Requesting Accommodations:** Students requesting academic or physical accommodations must initiate their request through the HCC Office for Students with Disabilities and Deaf Services (OSDDS) / Center for Accessibility Services.
- **Examples of Auxiliary Aids & Accommodations:**
 - Amplified stethoscopes
 - Portable speech amplifiers
 - Clear surgical masks for lip-reading/speech recognition
 - Magnifying headsets or magnifying microscope monitors
 - Non-allergenic (latex-free) examination gloves
- **Functional Limits:** An accommodation cannot fundamentally alter the essential clinical skills of the program, compromise patient care, or pose a direct safety threat to animals or personnel. If one auxiliary device or aid interferes with another needed to perform a critical task safely, the student's ability to meet the technical standard may be restricted.

Standard Technical Domains (Sensory, Psychomotor, Communication, Cognitive, Behavioral)

In accordance with O*NET occupational requirements (Code 31-9096.00) and NAVTA Essential Skills standards, students must demonstrate functional capabilities across five key domains:

1. Observation & Sensory Capabilities

Students must possess functional use of visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory senses to assist with patient assessment, monitoring, and hospital procedures:

- **Visual Acuity & Perception:**
 - Detect subtle changes in animal behavior, posture, or gait at distances ranging from 30 centimeters to 20 meters (e.g., recognizing stress or aggression cues, detecting respiratory distress, monitoring animals recovering from surgery).
 - Discriminate color and visual nuances (e.g., evaluating urine color and clarity, inspecting fecal flotation samples, checking syringe markings, reading prescription labels).
 - Possess sufficient visual acuity and depth perception to assist in surgical preparation, position animals for diagnostic imaging, and perform grooming or restraint tasks safely.
- **Auditory Function:**
 - Perceive natural and amplified voices without relying on lip-reading (e.g., receiving instructions in busy treatment rooms or surgical suites while personnel are wearing masks).
 - Determine the origin and distance of sounds (e.g., animal vocalizations, kennel activity, equipment alarms, autoclaves, or monitoring equipment).

- Auscultate body sounds to determine basic heart and respiratory rates using a stethoscope under supervision.
- **Tactile & Proprioceptive Function:**
 - Possess tactile sensitivity and proprioception to safely feel and hold veins for venipuncture restraint, feel patient pulses, and assess body temperature.
 - Differentiate textures and structural integrity when handling surgical instruments, bandaging materials, or restraining patients.

2. Psychomotor & Physical Capabilities

Students must possess the physical stamina, strength, and fine motor coordination necessary to carry out clinic operations and restrain diverse species safely:

- **Fine Motor Skills & Manual Dexterity:**
 - Hold, manipulate, and operate veterinary equipment and tools in one or both hands (e.g., preparing syringes, handling microhematocrit tubes, applying muzzles and Elizabethan collars, operating autoclaves, using clippers).
 - Make legible, rapid written and electronic medical entries (e.g., maintaining surgical/laboratory logs, recording vital signs, updating client invoices).
- **Physical Stamina & Lifting Limits:**
 - **Constantly (67–100% of the time):** Lift objects and animals weighing 0 to 5 pounds.
 - **Frequently (34–66% of the time):** Lift objects and animals weighing 5 to 20 pounds.
 - **Occasionally (1–33% of the time):** Lift objects and animals weighing 20 to 50 pounds to a height of 1 meter and carry them a distance of 2 meters (e.g., transferring patients to exam tables, moving supply boxes or food bags).
- **Gross Motor Function & Reaction Speed:**
 - Move the entire body rapidly to avoid injury when handling unpredictable, fearful, or aggressive animals.
 - Demonstrate physical agility to bend, stoop, kneel, reach, and stand for extended periods during surgical prep, kennel sanitation, or patient examinations.
 - Restrain small animals (and optional large or exotic species) using species-appropriate physical techniques, halters, poles, and safety devices.

3. Communication Capabilities

Students must be able to communicate effectively, professionally, and empathetically with faculty, peers, veterinary staff, and clients:

- **Verbal & Written English Proficiency:** Read, write, speak, and comprehend the English language fluently to convey medical and operational information accurately.

- **Masked & Remote Communication:** Express clear verbal commands and notifications in noisy or masked environments (e.g., surgical preparation rooms, isolation wards, busy holding areas).
- **Client & Team Communication:** Greet clients, obtain patient histories, communicate basic care or medication instructions, and collaborate respectfully within the veterinary healthcare team.
- **Independent Communication & AI Policy:** Communicate effectively, accurately, and in real time, both orally and in writing, using independent knowledge and communication skills, without reliance on artificial intelligence (AI) tools, automated translation aids, or real-time language generation software during patient handling, clinical procedures, practical exams, or emergency notifications.

Rationale: In clinical environments, veterinary assistants must provide immediate verbal updates to technicians and veterinarians and log medical notes on the spot. Real-time patient safety and team coordination depend on direct, unassisted communication.

4. Cognitive & Critical Thinking Capabilities

Students must demonstrate the intellectual ability to process operational and basic medical information accurately:

- **Information Processing & Math Skills:** Read prescriptions, calculate basic food portions/dry matter, convert units of measure, and perform basic inventory or billing calculations.
- **Clinical Recognition & Emergency Triage:** Recognize normal vs. abnormal patient behavior/vitals, identify potential medical emergencies over the phone or in person, and immediately notify the attending veterinarian or veterinary technician.
- **Recordkeeping & Compliance:** Follow hospital protocols, comply with OSHA/SDS guidelines, maintain accurate laboratory and surgical logs, and safely manage biological waste.

5. Behavioral, Emotional & Safety Standards

Students must demonstrate the emotional stability and professional maturity needed to practice safely in fast-paced clinical environments:

- **Stress Management & Composure:** Maintain composure, efficiency, and focus during high-stress situations, emergency patient admissions, or emotionally difficult circumstances (such as euthanasia and post-mortem care).
- **Work Ethic & Professionalism:** Demonstrate dependability, attention to detail, punctuality, ethical conduct, respect for the human-animal bond, and acceptance of constructive supervision.
- **Allergies & Medical Clearances:** Students with known allergies to common animal species (cats, dogs, rodents, rabbits, birds, horses, livestock) or bedding material (hay,

wood shavings) must provide written medical clearance from their treating physician stating they can safely interact with these species and work environments.

- **Phobias & Species Engagement:** Coursework and essential skills require sustained contact with a broad range of domestic, laboratory, farm, and exotic species. Students must acknowledge that fear or phobias of specific species will not exempt them from completing required curriculum skills.

Section III: Admission Requirements & Application Process

Selective Admission Guidelines & Key Dates

Admission to the Holyoke Community College (HCC) Veterinary Assistant Program is selective and competitive; meeting minimum criteria does not guarantee acceptance. One cohort is admitted each year beginning in the Fall semester.

Veterinary assistant training provides foundational knowledge and practical hands-on skills. The Program's curriculum prepares graduates to deliver safe support care within the veterinary healthcare team and qualifies them to sit for the Approved Veterinary Assistant (AVA) national examination sponsored by NAVTA. Applicants are evaluated based on academic preparation, prerequisite completion, and overall application completeness.

- **Application Form:** Both new and current HCC students must indicate "**Veterinary Assistant Certificate**" on their application form.
- **Application Deadline: May 1** (for admission into the following Fall semester).
- **Acceptance Notifications:** Typically sent out on a rolling basis ending in mid- to late-June.

Admissions Office Contact:

- **Email:** admissions@hcc.edu
- **Phone:** 413-552-2321

Academic Prerequisites

Applicants must fulfill the following academic requirements prior to admission consideration:

- **English Eligibility (ENG 101):** Applicants must demonstrate eligibility for ENG 101 (English Composition I) prior to the start of the program.
- **Program Information Session:** Attendance at an official Health Career / Veterinary Assistant Program Information Session within one (1) year prior to the application deadline is required. Contact the Admissions Office to reserve a spot or learn how to attend.
- **Applicant Responsibility:** It is the applicant's sole responsibility to verify with the HCC Admissions Office that all application materials, official transcripts, and required forms have been received and that their file is 100% complete prior to the May 1 deadline. Incomplete application files will not be reviewed for admission.

Post-Acceptance Compliance & Health Requirements

Once conditionally accepted into the Veterinary Assistant Program, students must fulfill the following health and administrative requirements prior to starting classes or clinical coursework:

- **Health Insurance & Immunizations:** Proof of active health insurance coverage, titers, and compliance with all college immunization policies as detailed in the general HCC Student Handbook at the following link: [HCC Student Handbook](#).
- **Rabies & Tetanus Guidance:** Rabies vaccination is **strongly recommended** (though not required for program admission). Up-to-date tetanus immunization is required per general health compliance guidelines.
- **Mandatory Orientation:** Attendance at the required Veterinary Assistant Student Orientation in late August (date TBD).

Recommended Experience

- **Clinical Observation:** While not strictly required for admission, completing volunteer or shadow hours in a licensed veterinary facility is strongly recommended. Hands-on exposure ensures applicants have a realistic understanding of daily hospital operations and the role of the veterinary assistant within the medical team.

Section IV: Health, Immunization & Background Check Compliance

Mandatory Health Insurance Policy

All students enrolled in the Veterinary Assistant Program at Holyoke Community College (HCC), whether taking courses on a **full-time or part-time** basis, are required to maintain active health insurance coverage at all times throughout their enrollment in the Program.

Compliance Requirements & Coverage Options

- **Proof of Coverage:** Students must provide official proof of active health insurance coverage prior to beginning coursework and maintain valid documentation throughout the academic year.
- **Insurance Options:** Students may satisfy this requirement through:
 - Maintenance of their own independent/private health insurance policy, **or**
 - Purchase of the college-sponsored health insurance plan through Holyoke Community College.
- **Student Responsibility:** It is the student's sole responsibility to ensure there is no lapse in coverage during their time in the Veterinary Assistant Program.

Consequences of Non-Compliance: Maintaining continuous health insurance coverage is a prerequisite for participating in laboratory sessions and off-campus clinical experiences. Failure to maintain active health insurance or provide required documentation will result in immediate exclusion from VEA-prefix classes, laboratories, and/or dismissal from the Veterinary Assistant Program.

General State & Departmental Immunizations

Under Massachusetts law (**M.G.L. Chapter 76, Section 15C** and **105 CMR 220.000**), all full-time and part-time health science students must submit official proof of immunization within **30 days of registering for courses**. Documentation must be uploaded directly to the student's personal **CastleBranch account** for verification.

Required State & Departmental Vaccines

- **MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella):** Two (2) doses required.
 - *Alternative:* Official documentation of positive antibody blood titers for Measles, Mumps, and Rubella.
- **Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis):** One (1) dose of Pertussis-containing Tdap administered within the last **10 years**.

- **Hepatitis B:** Full series completed.
 - *Alternative:* Official documentation of a positive Hepatitis B surface antibody titer.
- **Varicella (Chickenpox):** Two (2) doses **OR** official physician-signed documentation with dates of prior disease history.
 - *Alternative:* Official documentation of a positive Varicella antibody titer.
- **Meningococcal Conjugate (MenACWY):** Required for students **21 years of age and younger**. Must show proof of receiving a quadrivalent dose on or after their 16th birthday **OR** complete the official MDPH Meningococcal Information Waiver form.
- **Annual Influenza (Flu):** One (1) dose required annually for the active flu season.
- **Rabies Pre-Exposure Series:** Recommended but not required for HCC Veterinary Assistant students (see detailed policy below).

Public Health & Safety Context

Rabies is a fatal but preventable viral disease endemic to Massachusetts. Animal healthcare workers face potential exposure through bites, scratches, or contact with saliva. Pre-exposure vaccination simplifies post-exposure medical treatment and significantly reduces health risks during animal care.

Pre-Exposure Rabies Vaccination

- **Series Requirements:** Students may submit documentation of the CDC-recommended **2-dose pre-exposure rabies vaccination series** to their CastleBranch account.
- **Documentation Standards:** Submissions must include administration dates, drug name, dosage, manufacturer, route, and administrator signature/clinic site stamp (e.g., CVS, campus clinic, or medical provider).
- **Financial Responsibility:** Students are responsible for the cost of the rabies vaccination series.

Section V: Curriculum, Program Objectives & Program Costs

Program Objectives & Ultimate Outcomes

First-Semester Objectives

The primary focus of the first semester is to establish core administrative, safety, and foundational patient-handling skills to prepare students for initial clinical training. During their first semester, students will:

- **Master Front Desk & Customer Service:** Gain practical skills in client communication, appointment scheduling, patient intake, and patient discharge.
- **Develop Safe Animal Handling Skills:** Build foundational knowledge of canine, feline, and exotic animal behavior and master safe physical restraint techniques.
- **Understand Workplace Safety:** Learn compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards and liability protection in veterinary practice.
- **Recognize Common Pathologies:** Identify common veterinary diseases and clinical medical conditions.
- **Prepare for Externship Fieldwork:** Build the practical knowledge and professional readiness required for initial externship placement (VEA 182).
- **Begin NAVTA Skills Verification:** Become familiar with and demonstrate initial competency in skills outlined on the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) Essential Skills list.

Second-Semester Objectives

The second semester advances students into clinical support roles, laboratory prep, imaging assistance, surgical support, and inpatient care in preparation for credentialing. During their second semester, students will:

- **Apply Anatomy & Physiology:** Deepen knowledge of basic animal anatomy, physiology, and common clinical diseases encountered in practice.
- **Assist in Diagnostic & Laboratory Operations:** Assist veterinary technicians with laboratory preparation, including supply setup and animal restraint for specimen collection.
- **Provide Surgical & Post-Operative Support:** Assist in preparing patient suites and surgical patients, and provide attentive post-operative care.
- **Assist in Diagnostic Imaging & Records:** Assist veterinary technicians with physical restraint during radiographic procedures and manage electronic and physical medical files.

- **Deliver Hospitalized Patient Care:** Provide appropriate care and monitoring for hospitalized patients under the direct supervision of a veterinarian.
- **Complete NAVTA Essential Skills:** Complete all required clinical skills outlined in the NAVTA Essential Skills list.
- **Prepare for National Credentialing:** Satisfy all educational requirements needed to sit for the Approved Veterinary Assistant (AVA) examination.

Ultimate Program Outcomes for Graduates

Upon completion of the HCC Veterinary Assistant Program, graduates will demonstrate entry-level proficiency across all essential operational and clinical domains:

1. Office Procedures & Client Care

- **Front Desk & Administrative Support:** Provide professional customer service, schedule appointments, handle client intake/discharge, and manage patient files.
- **Client Communication:** Communicate effectively and empathetically with pet owners regarding scheduling, hospital procedures, and basic patient care instructions.

2. Clinical, Diagnostic & Surgical Assistance

- **Animal Restraint & Behavior:** Safely execute species-appropriate restraint techniques for canines, felines, and exotics during exams and procedures.
- **Laboratory & Diagnostic Support:** Assist veterinary technicians in setting up laboratory supplies, restraining animals for blood/specimen collection, and maintaining lab environments.
- **Radiography Assistance:** Assist with patient positioning and safe physical restraint during diagnostic radiographic imaging.
- **Surgical Prep & Post-Op Care:** Assist in surgical suite preparation, patient prep, and monitoring recovering patients following surgical procedures.

3. Patient Nursing & Workplace Safety

- **Hospitalized Care:** Administer basic nursing care, feeding, and monitoring for hospitalized animals under the direction of a veterinarian or credentialed technician.
- **Anatomy & Disease Knowledge:** Apply basic knowledge of animal anatomy, physiology, and disease processes to daily patient observation.
- **OSHA & Facility Safety:** Adhere strictly to OSHA safety regulations, hazardous materials protocols, facility sanitation, and liability protection guidelines within veterinary practices.

Terminology & Professional Titles

Understanding industry terminology helps clarify educational levels, credentialing requirements, and professional distinctions within the veterinary healthcare team:

- **Veterinary Assistant:** A trained animal healthcare team member who performs vital administrative, clinical support, patient handling, and facility maintenance tasks under veterinary or technician supervision.
- **Approved Veterinary Assistant (AVA):** A veterinary assistant who has graduated from a NAVTA-approved program and successfully passed the national Approved Veterinary Assistant examination.
- **Veterinary Technician (CVT / RVT / LVT):** A professional who has graduated from an AVMA-accredited Associate degree program and passed the Veterinary Technician National Examination (VTNE) to become certified/registered/licensed.
- **Veterinary Technologist:** A professional who has graduated from an AVMA-accredited 4-year Bachelor's degree program in veterinary technology.
- **Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM / VMD):** A licensed veterinarian who has completed a doctorate in veterinary medicine and holds sole legal authority to diagnose conditions, prescribe medications, and perform surgery.
- **NAVTA:** National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America, the national professional association that approves veterinary assistant education programs.

Certificate Plan & Course Sequence

- **Program Code:** X037
- **Total Program Credits:** 10 Semester Hours
- **Credential Awarded:** Certificate of Completion

Critical Academic Progression Policies:

- **Minimum Grade Requirement:** Students must achieve a minimum grade of **"C" (2.0)** in all **VEA-prefix** courses to remain in and graduate from this curriculum.

Semester Course Sequence:

- **First Semester (Fall) — 5 Credits Total**
 - **VEA 110:** Veterinary Assistant I — 4 credits
 - **VEA 182:** Veterinary Assistant Externship I — 1 credit
- **Second Semester (Spring) — 5 Credits Total**
 - **VEA 112:** Veterinary Assistant II — 4 credits
 - **VEA 183:** Veterinary Assistant Externship II — 1 credit
- **Total Program Credits:** 10 credits

Estimated Expenses, Materials, & Program-Specific Fees

Institutional Tuition & Financial Resources

Tuition, general college fees, and health insurance costs are set by Holyoke Community College and are subject to periodic change. For current tuition rates, fee schedules, and financial aid resources, please refer to the official college resources at the following links:

- [HCC Cost of Attendance Page](#)
- [HCC Net Price Calculator](#)

Course Materials: Cougar Access Program

Holyoke Community College partners with **eCampus.com** to provide **Cougar Access**, an equitable access program designed to ensure you have all required textbooks and course materials ready on or before the first day of class.

- **Automatic Enrollment:** You are automatically enrolled in the program upon registering for your courses.
- **Delivery & Pickup:** Digital textbooks and resources are delivered directly through Canvas or your eCampus digital bookshelf. Physical textbooks and required print materials are available for pickup at the **HCC Campus Store** (Campus Center, 2nd Floor) or through the 24/7 **Bookstore Lockers**.
- **Rental Returns:** Physical books provided through Cougar Access are rentals and must be returned to the Campus Store at the end of the semester.

Veterinary Assistant Program-Specific Fees & Costs

In addition to general college tuition, service fees, distance learning fees, and general course materials, students in the Veterinary Assistant Program are responsible for the following program-specific expenses:

- **Liability Insurance:** Students must purchase the college-sponsored group liability insurance policy (*Current Cost: Approximately \$15 per year*).
- **CastleBranch Credential Tracking Subscription:** Required for upload and secure verification of mandatory health records, immunizations, and background checks.
- **RECOVER BLS Certification:** Recommended for purchase. This online training provides internationally recognized certification in veterinary Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Life Support (ALS) (*Current Cost: Approximately \$60*).

Required Lab Gear, Uniforms & Clinical Equipment

Students must possess required personal protective equipment (PPE) and clinical attire prior to the start of laboratory sessions and clinical externships.

- **Scrubs:** Required scrub sets for laboratory sessions, clinical exercises, and off-campus externships (**VEA 182 / VEA 183**).
 - *Recommended Color:* Kelly Green or Hunter/Forest Green.
 - *Recommended Quantity:* Two (2) sets of scrubs so you always have a clean set ready for consecutive lab days or clinical sites.
- **Where to Purchase:** Required lab coats, safety goggles, scrubs, and general supplies can be ordered online through the HCC Online Campus Store at the following link: [HCC Online Campus Store / eCampus Store](#), purchased in person at the **HCC Campus Store** (located on the second floor of the Campus Center), or purchased through an **outside retailer of your choice** (e.g., local scrub shops, Amazon, or online medical uniform supply outlets).
- **Recommended Clinical Diagnostic Tools:**
 - **Timepiece:** Watch with a sweep second hand (or digital display showing seconds) for measuring patient heart, pulse, and respiratory rates.
(*Smartwatches may be restricted during certain practical examinations*).

Section VI: Academic Standards, Grading & Progression Policies

Graduation Requirements

To earn the Veterinary Assistant Completion Certificate and fulfill graduation requirements from Holyoke Community College, every student must meet the following mandatory criteria:

- **Minimum VEA Course Grades:** Pass all Veterinary Assistant Program (VEA) courses with a final grade of "C" or better.
- **Credit & Curriculum Completion:** Complete all 10 credit hours, including all required general education and Veterinary Assistant Program courses specified in the college catalog and student handbook.
- **Essential Skills Sign-Off:** Fulfill and obtain formal instructor signatures for all Essential Skills mandated by the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA). The Veterinary Assistant Skills list can be found in this handbook (see **Appendix**) and online at the following link:
[PDF Essential Skills for VA 2023-7 FINAL 2023.pdf](#) .
- **Financial Obligations:** Fulfill all financial accounts and obligations with Holyoke Community College.

Written Assignment Standards (APA) & Academic Integrity

Assignment Formatting Guidelines

Unless otherwise directed by the course instructor, all written papers and assignments must strictly follow APA Format standards:

- **Paper & Printing:** Typed and printed on standard white 8.5 x 11-inch unlined paper, printed on one side only.
- **Typography:** 12-point standard font, double-spaced throughout.
- **Margins & Indents:** 1-inch margins on all sides. Indent paragraphs approximately 0.5 inches (1 tab stop).
- **Pagination:** Page numbers begin on Page 2 (do not number Page 1).
- **Header / Title:** Place your name, course number, and date in the top left-hand corner of the first page (or use a title page as assigned), with the title centered above the text.
- **Binding:** Staple in the upper left corner. Do not use plastic binders or covers.
- **Citations:** Cite all sources using current APA guidelines. Assistance is available through the HCC Writing Center.

Academic Integrity Policy

Students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of honesty, authenticity, and independent academic work.

- **Academic Dishonesty:** Plagiarism, cheating, unauthorized collaboration, or falsification of data puts a student at immediate risk of receiving a failing grade and/or dismissal from the Veterinary Assistant Program.
- **Disciplinary Procedures:** When academic dishonesty is suspected, faculty may issue a failing grade or refer the matter directly to the Dean of Students. Where a failing grade results in program dismissal, the charge is referred directly to the Dean of Students for formal administration. Refer to the HCC Student Handbook for the complete Academic Integrity Policy and Grade Appeal Procedures.

Grading Scale, Rounding, & Dual-Competency Policy (Lecture/Lab)

Standard Grade Scale & Percentage Breakdown

- **A:** 93% – 100%
- **A-:** 90% – 92%
- **B+:** 87% – 89%
- **B:** 83% – 86%
- **B-:** 80% – 82%
- **C+:** 77% – 79%
- **C:** 73% – 76% (Minimum Passing Grade for VEA Courses)
- **C-:** 70% – 72%
- **D+:** 67% – 69%
- **D:** 63% – 66%
- **D-:** 60% – 62%
- **F:** Below 60% (Failing Grade — Results in Permanent Dismissal)

Official Rounding Policy

Final course percentages are calculated to the tenths place.

- **Fractional Rounding Rule:** Final grades ending in 0.50 or higher will automatically be rounded UP to the next whole percentage number.
- *Example:* A calculated final course average of 72.5% officially rounds up to 73.0% (Grade of "C").
- *Example:* A calculated final course average of 72.49% will NOT round up and remains a 72.0% / 72.49% (Grade of "C-"), which constitutes a non-passing grade in the program.

Dual Lecture & Laboratory Competency Requirement

Veterinary technology education requires demonstrated mastery in both theoretical knowledge and practical clinical application.

- **Critical Dual-Competency Mandate:** For any course that includes both a lecture and a laboratory section, the student must achieve a final grade of "C" (73.0%) or higher in the lecture section **AND** a "C" (73.0%) or higher in the laboratory section independently to successfully pass the course. Achieving an overall passing cumulative average across the combined sections will NOT compensate for a non-passing grade (below 73.0%) in either individual section.
- **Grade Reversion Protocol (Mandatory Course Grade Penalty):** If, at the conclusion of the course, a student earns a grade lower than a "C" (below 72.5% prior to rounding) in either the lecture section or the laboratory section, their overall recorded final course grade will automatically revert to that lower grade earned in the non-passing section (or a maximum grade of "C-", whichever is lower). Earning below a "C" in either section results in a course failure.

NAVTA Essential Skills Completion & Remediation Policy

To graduate and meet accreditation standards set by the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA), every student must independently perform and be officially signed off on 100% of required Essential Skills.

Essential Skills Evaluation Protocol

- **Instruction & Demonstration:** The course instructor will teach and demonstrate each Essential Skill once during class or laboratory sessions, detailing proper technique and critical safety guidelines.
- **Independent Execution:** The student must independently perform the skill without assistance and pass the skill to the instructor's satisfaction.
- **Handbook Acknowledgment:** By signing the Student Handbook Acknowledgement Form upon entry into the Veterinary Assistant Program, students formally confirm their understanding of the grade policy, safety rules, and the non-negotiable requirement that missing or failing Essential Skills prevents course passage and program completion.

Remediation Policy for Non-Critical Skill Failures

If a student fails an initial attempt on an Essential Skill that does not involve a critical safety violation:

- **Feedback & Coaching:** The instructor will provide specific diagnostic feedback explaining why the initial attempt was unsatisfactory.

- **One (1) Remediation Attempt:** The student is granted one (1) chance at remediation to re-perform the skill independently without assistance.
- **Outcome:** Successful independent re-performance satisfies the skill requirement. A second failure on the skill will result in an immediate failure of the skill and a failing grade ("F") in the course, resulting in immediate dismissal from the Program with no chance of readmittance.

Missed Skill Policy & Absence Remediation Agreement

Because live animal use, specialized equipment, and faculty supervision are strictly scheduled, absences during scheduled Essential Skill evaluations pose a severe risk to program continuation.

- **Standard Rule:** Absence during a scheduled skill evaluation automatically results in a failure of the skill and course failure.
- **Strict Conditions for Permitted Make-Up Attempts:** If an absence is excused by the instructor due to documented, catastrophic circumstances, a make-up attempt may be permitted under the following strict conditions:
 - **No Guaranteed In-Person Setup:** Instructors are not obligated or always able to recreate live lab setups.
 - **Independent Video Submission Option:** If an in-person make-up cannot be accommodated by faculty, the student may be required to independently arrange, perform, and record an unedited, high-definition video of the skill for instructor review.
 - **Incomplete Grades & Remediation Agreement:** A missed skill that cannot be remediated before final grade submissions will result in a grade of Incomplete ("I"), which converts to an "F" if the skill is not completed within the mandated timeframe.
 - **Missed Skill Remediation Agreement:** The student must sign a formal Missed Skill Remediation Agreement acknowledging that they cannot progress or graduate without making up the skill.

Progression, Course Repeat Limits, & Dismissal Criteria

To remain enrolled in the Veterinary Assistant Program curriculum, students must maintain strict academic performance:

- **Course Pass Standard:** Students must earn a grade of "C" (73.0%) or higher in every VEA course. Earning a "C-" or below results in dismissal from the program.
- **Essential Skills Mastery:** Students must be individually signed off by the course instructor for 100% of NAVTA Essential Skills designated for that course. Failure to

master and receive sign-off on all Essential Skills will result in a non-passing grade for the course, regardless of numerical exam scores.

- **Course Repeat Limit (Grades C- to D-):** A student who earns a non-passing grade between "C-" and "D-" (or receives a "W" or "AW") in a VEA course may apply to repeat that course **one time only** across the entire program curriculum. Attempting any single VEA course twice without earning a "C" or better results in permanent dismissal without chance of readmittance.
- **Grade of "F" Policy (Strict Non-Readmittance):** Earning a final grade of "F" (below 60.0%) in any VEA-prefix course results in immediate dismissal from the Veterinary Assistant Program with NO chance of readmittance or course repetition.

Comprehensive Program Dismissal Criteria

Continuation in the Veterinary Assistant Program requires strict adherence to academic, ethical, legal, and safety standards. Commission of any of the following will result in immediate program dismissal:

- **Grade of "F" Failure:** Earning a final grade of "F" in any VEA-prefix course (results in permanent dismissal with no chance of readmittance).
- **Grade Point Requirements:** Failure to achieve a minimum grade of "C" (2.0) in all VEA-prefix courses or failure to meet college-wide academic standing policies.
- **Unmet Prerequisites:** Failure to meet all course prerequisites and corequisites in proper sequence. If it is discovered that a student registered without fulfilling required prerequisites, they will be dropped from the course and program.
- **Safety Violations:** Commission of any non-negotiable safety violation during lab, clinical exercises, or off-campus externships.
- **Incomplete Essential Skills:** Failure to successfully perform and be signed off on all required NAVTA Essential Skills.
- **Unprofessional or Unethical Conduct:** Violations of the HCC Code of Student Conduct, the HCC Veterinary Assistant Student Handbook, or the NAVTA Veterinary Technician Code of Ethics.
- **Health & Clearance Non-Compliance:** Failure to submit required immunizations or active health insurance proofs.

Note: Students dismissed from the Veterinary Assistant Program may continue enrolling in general education courses at HCC provided they remain in good academic standing with the College.

Non-Negotiable Safety Violations

Patient safety, student safety, and occupational health are paramount. Safety violations are non-negotiable. Safety rules associated with each skill will be explicitly covered by the instructor during initial skill demonstrations.

Critical Safety Warning: If, during the performance of any Essential Skill, lab exercise, or clinical experience, a student commits a severe safety violation, the student will immediately fail the skill, fail the course (receiving a grade of "F"), and be dismissed from the Veterinary Assistant Program with **NO CHANCE OF READMITTANCE**.

Examples of Non-Negotiable Safety Violations include, but are not limited to:

- **Chemical / Stain Contamination:** Placing bare hands or exposed skin directly into tissue stains, hazardous chemicals, or fixatives.
- **Needle Safety Breaches:** Repeated needle stick injuries caused by reckless handling, improper recapping techniques, or failure to follow safe sharp disposal protocols.
- **Gross Animal Restraint Failures:** Dropping, stepping on, or recklessly releasing a restrained animal, or applying cruel, unsafe, or unauthorized restraint that endangers the animal, student, or peers.
- **Radiological Safety Violations:** Placing any body part directly in the primary x-ray beam or failing to wear required lead shielding (aprons, thyroid collars, gloves) during exposure.
- **Anesthetic Equipment Mishandling:** Operating anesthetic machines without verifying oxygen flow, leaving pop-off valves closed during spontaneous breathing, or improperly securing gas cylinders.

Credit Transfer, Withdrawals, & Program Reinstatement

Acceptance of Transfer Credits into HCC

- **General Education Requirements:** Holyoke Community College (HCC) typically accepts transfer credits for general education coursework from accredited institutions, subject to transcript evaluation by the Student Records Office.
- **Program (VEA) Requirements:** Except in rare, documented extenuating circumstances, the Veterinary Assistant Program does not accept transfer credits for fulfillment of core VEA-prefix courses. Core veterinary technology coursework must be completed in residence at HCC to ensure NAVTA skill compliance.
- **Transcript Evaluation:** The Student Records Office maintains all official academic records, evaluates transfer transcripts, and certifies students for degree completion.

Transferability of HCC Credits to Other Institutions

Acceptance of credits earned in the HCC Veterinary Assistant Program by other colleges, universities, or veterinary assistant programs is strictly determined by the receiving institution. The Program makes no guarantee that credits earned in the HCC Veterinary Assistant Program will be accepted for transfer by outside institutions.

Course & Program Withdrawal Policy

Students wishing to withdraw from a VEA-prefix course or the Veterinary Assistant Program must follow official college protocols:

- **Mandatory Advising Meeting:** Prior to submitting an official withdrawal form, the student must meet with their academic advisor to discuss the impact of withdrawal on program progression and graduation timelines.
- **Official Student Records Contact:** To officially withdraw from the Program, or the College, students must contact the HCC Student Records Office to complete and submit the official withdrawal documentation. Ceasing to attend classes, informing an instructor, or stopping clinical externship attendance does **not** constitute an official withdrawal and will result in a final grade of "F" recorded on the student's official transcript.
- **Financial Aid & Refund Policies:** Students are strongly advised to review the HCC College Withdrawal Policy and consult the Financial Aid Office regarding federal regulations, satisfactory academic progress (SAP), and financial obligations.
- **Withdrawal Deadlines:** Course withdrawals must be initiated prior to the official deadline published in the HCC Academic Calendar for the given semester.

Program Reinstatement Policy & Appeals Criteria

Reinstatement into the Veterinary Assistant Program after official withdrawal or academic dismissal is not guaranteed and is governed by strict departmental deadlines and seat availability.

- **Mandatory Reinstatement Application Deadlines**
 - A student seeking readmission following an eligible withdrawal or non-passing grade ("C-" to "D-") must submit a formal written request to the Chair of the Veterinary & Animal Science Department adhering strictly to the following deadlines:
 - **Fall Semester Withdrawal/Failure:** Written notification to the Department Chair and a new formal application to the college must be submitted prior to the May 1st admission deadline for consideration for the following academic year.
 - **Spring Semester Withdrawal/Failure:** Written notification must be submitted to the Department Chair on or before May 31st of that Spring semester.

- **Reinstatement Eligibility & Evaluation Criteria**
 - Reinstatement approval depends upon:
 - **Ineligibility for Reinstatement:** Students dismissed for earning a grade of "F" in any VEA course, non-negotiable safety violations, or ethical breaches are permanently ineligible for readmission.
 - **Class Space Availability:** Total enrollment capacity in required VEA courses.
 - **Faculty & Divisional Approval:** Formal review and unanimous approval by departmental faculty and the Department Chair.
 - **Compliance with Current Admissions Catalog:** Reinstated students must satisfy all published admission requirements in effect at the time of readmission.
- **Required Reinstatement Appeal Components**
 - To be considered for reinstatement, an eligible student's written appeal must explicitly demonstrate and detail all of the following:
 - **Identification of Root Causes:** A thorough, self-reflective explanation of the specific academic, personal, time-management, or environmental factors that contributed to the prior course failure or withdrawal.
 - **Demonstrated Corrective Action & Growth:** Specific, concrete steps taken since the withdrawal/failure to resolve or mitigate those underlying issues (e.g., utilization of academic tutoring, medical/personal health management, adjusted work schedules, or study skills workshops).
 - **Comprehensive Academic Success Plan:** A realistic, actionable plan detailing how the student intends to manage their course load, clinical commitments, study hours, and personal obligations upon readmission to ensure a grade of "C" or better.
 - **Commitment to Program & Professional Standards:** A written reaffirmation of the student's commitment to adhering to all department policies, clinical dress codes, attendance standards, and the NAVTA Code of Ethics.

- *Appeal Review Notice: Submitting a reinstatement appeal does not guarantee readmission. Reinstatement decisions are made by the Department Faculty Committee based on the strength of the appeal, prior clinical safety records, and available seat capacity in the course cohort.*

Section VI: Academic Standards, Grading & Progression Policies

Graduation Requirements

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- **C:** 73% – 76% (*Minimum Passing Grade for VEA Courses*)
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Veterinary assistant education requires demonstrated mastery in both theoretical knowledge and practical clinical application.

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- **Grade Reversion Protocol (Mandatory Course Grade Penalty):** If, at the conclusion of the course, a student earns a grade lower than a "C" (below 72.5% prior to rounding) in **either** the lecture section or the laboratory section, their overall recorded final course grade will automatically revert to that lower grade earned in the non-passing section (or a maximum grade of "C-", whichever is lower). Earning below a "C" in either section results in a course failure, requiring the student to repeat the entire course (subject to program continuation rules).

NAVTA Essential Skills Completion & Remediation Policy

To graduate and meet accreditation standards set by the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) , every student must independently perform and be officially signed off on 100% of required Essential Skills.

Essential Skills Evaluation Protocol

- **Instruction & Demonstration:** The course instructor will teach and demonstrate each Essential Skill once during class or laboratory sessions, detailing proper technique and critical safety guidelines.
- **Independent Execution:** The student must independently perform the skill without assistance and pass the skill to the instructor's satisfaction.
- **Handbook Acknowledgment:** By signing the Student Handbook Acknowledgement Form upon entry into the Veterinary Assistant Program, students formally confirm their understanding of the grade policy, safety rules, and the non-negotiable requirement that missing or failing Essential Skills prevents course passage and program completion.

Remediation Policy for Non-Critical Skill Failures

If a student fails an initial attempt on an Essential Skill that does not involve a critical safety violation:

- **Feedback & Coaching:** The instructor will provide specific diagnostic feedback explaining why the initial attempt was unsatisfactory.
- **One (1) Remediation Attempt:** The student is granted one (1) chance at remediation to re-perform the skill independently without assistance.
- **Outcome:** Successful independent re-performance satisfies the skill requirement. A second failure on the skill will result in an immediate failure of the skill and a failing grade ("F") in the course, prohibiting progression in the Program.

Missed Skill Policy & Absence Remediation Agreement

Because live animal use, specialized equipment, and faculty supervision are strictly scheduled, absences during scheduled Essential Skill evaluations pose a severe risk to program continuation.

- **Standard Rule:** Absence during a scheduled skill evaluation automatically results in a failure of the skill and course failure.
- **Strict Conditions for Permitted Make-Up Attempts:** If an absence is excused by the instructor due to documented, catastrophic circumstances, a make-up attempt may be permitted under the following strict conditions:
 - **No Guaranteed In-Person Setup:** Instructors are not obligated or always able to recreate live lab setups.
 - **Independent Video Submission Option:** If an in-person make-up cannot be accommodated by faculty, the student may be required to independently arrange, perform, and record an unedited, high-definition video of the skill for instructor review.
 - **Incomplete Grades & Remediation Agreement:** A missed skill that cannot be remediated before final grade submissions will result in a grade of Incomplete ("I"), which converts to an "F" if the skill is not completed within the mandated timeframe.
 - **Missed Skill Remediation Agreement:** The student must sign a formal Missed Skill Remediation Agreement acknowledging that they cannot progress or graduate without making up the skill.

Progression, Course Repeat Limits, & Dismissal Criteria

To remain enrolled in the Veterinary Assistant Program curriculum, students must maintain strict academic performance:

- **Course Pass Standard:** Students must earn a grade of "C" (73.0%) or higher in every VEA course. Earning a "C-" or below results in dismissal from the program.
- **Essential Skills Mastery:** Students must be individually signed off by the course instructor for 100% of NAVTA Essential Skills designated for that course. Failure to

master and receive sign-off on all Essential Skills will result in a non-passing grade for the course, regardless of numerical exam scores.

- **Course Repeat Limit (Grades C- to D-):** A student who earns a non-passing grade between "C-" and "D-" (or receives a "W") in a VEA course may apply to repeat that course **one time only** across the entire program curriculum. Attempting any single VEA course twice without earning a "C" or better results in permanent dismissal without chance of readmittance.
- **Grade of "F" Policy (Strict Non-Readmittance):** Earning a final grade of "F" (below 60.0%) in any VEA-prefix course results in immediate dismissal from the Veterinary Assistant Program with NO chance of readmittance or course repetition.

Comprehensive Program Dismissal Criteria

Continuation in the Veterinary Assistant Program requires strict adherence to academic, ethical, legal, and safety standards. Failure to meet these criteria will result in immediate program dismissal:

- **Grade Point Requirements:** Failure to achieve a minimum grade of "C" (2.0) in all VEA-prefix courses or failure to meet college-wide academic standing policies.
- **Unmet Prerequisites:** Failure to meet all course prerequisites and corequisites in proper sequence. If it is discovered that a student registered without fulfilling required prerequisites, they will be dropped from the course and program.
- **Safety Violations:** Commission of any non-negotiable safety violation during lab, clinical exercises, or off-campus externships.
- **Incomplete Essential Skills:** Failure to successfully perform and be signed off on all required NAVTA Essential Skills.
- **Unprofessional or Unethical Conduct:** Violations of the HCC Code of Student Conduct, the HCC Veterinary Assistant Student Handbook, or the NAVTA Veterinary Assistant Code of Ethics.
- **Health & Clearance Non-Compliance:** Failure to submit required immunizations or active health insurance proofs to CastleBranch.

Note: Students dismissed from the Veterinary Assistant Program may continue enrolling in general education courses at HCC provided they remain in good academic standing with the College.

Non-Negotiable Safety Violations

Patient safety, student safety, and occupational health are paramount. Safety violations are non-negotiable. Safety rules associated with each skill will be explicitly covered by the instructor during initial skill demonstrations.

Critical Safety Warning: If, during the performance of any Essential Skill, lab exercise, or clinical experience, a student commits a severe safety violation, the student will immediately fail the skill, fail the course, and be dismissed from the Veterinary Assistant Program with **NO CHANCE OF READMITTANCE**.

Examples of Non-Negotiable Safety Violations include, but are not limited to:

- **Chemical / Stain Contamination:** Placing bare hands or exposed skin directly into tissue stains, hazardous chemicals, or fixatives.
- **Needle Safety Breaches:** Repeated needle stick injuries caused by reckless handling, improper recapping techniques, or failure to follow safe sharp disposal protocols.
- **Gross Animal Restraint Failures:** Dropping, stepping on, or recklessly releasing a restrained animal, or applying cruel, unsafe, or unauthorized restraint that endangers the animal, student, or peers.
- **Radiological Safety Violations:** Placing any body part directly in the primary x-ray beam or failing to wear required lead shielding (aprons, thyroid collars, gloves) during exposure.
- **Anesthetic Equipment Mishandling:** Operating anesthetic machines without verifying oxygen flow, leaving pop-off valves closed during spontaneous breathing, or improperly securing gas cylinders.

Credit Transfer, Withdrawals, & Program Reinstatement

Acceptance of Transfer Credits into HCC

- **General Education Requirements:** Holyoke Community College (HCC) typically accepts transfer credits for general education coursework from accredited institutions, subject to transcript evaluation by the Student Records Office.
- **Program (VEA) Requirements:** Except in rare, documented extenuating circumstances, the Veterinary Assistant Program does not accept transfer credits for fulfillment of core VEA-prefix courses. Core veterinary technology coursework must be completed in residence at HCC to ensure AVMA/CVTEA skill compliance.
- **Transcript Evaluation:** The Student Records Office maintains all official academic records, evaluates transfer transcripts, and certifies students for degree completion.

Transferability of HCC Credits to Other Institutions

Acceptance of credits earned in the HCC Veterinary Assistant Program by other colleges, universities, or veterinary technology/veterinary medicine programs is strictly determined by the receiving institution. The Program makes no guarantee that credits earned in the HCC Veterinary Assistant Program will be accepted for transfer by outside institutions.

Course & Program Withdrawal Policy

Students wishing to withdraw from a VEA-prefix course or the Veterinary Assistant Program must follow official college protocols:

- **Mandatory Advising Meeting:** Prior to submitting an official withdrawal form, the student must meet with their academic advisor to discuss the impact of withdrawal on program progression and graduation timelines.
- **Financial Aid & Refund Policies:** Students are strongly advised to review the HCC College Withdrawal Policy at [HCC College Withdrawal Policy](#) and consult the Financial Aid Office regarding federal regulations, satisfactory academic progress (SAP), and financial obligations.
- **Withdrawal Deadlines:** Course withdrawals must be initiated prior to the official deadline published in the HCC Academic Calendar for the given semester at [Academic Calendar | Holyoke Community College](#).

Program Reinstatement Policy & Appeals Criteria

Reinstatement into the Veterinary Assistant Program after official withdrawal or academic dismissal is not guaranteed and is governed by strict departmental deadlines and seat availability.

Mandatory Reinstatement Application Deadlines

A student seeking readmission must submit a formal written request to the Chair of the Veterinary & Animal Science Department adhering strictly to the following deadlines:

- **Fall Semester Withdrawal/Dismissal:** Written notification and a new formal application must be submitted to the Department Chair prior to the May 1st admission deadline for consideration for the following academic year.
- **Spring Semester Withdrawal/Dismissal:** Written notification must be submitted to the Department Chair on or before May 31st of that Spring semester.

Reinstatement Evaluation Criteria

Reinstatement approval depends upon:

- **Class Space Availability:** Total enrollment capacity in required VEA courses.
- **Reinstatement Eligibility:** Students dismissed for non-negotiable safety violations or ethical breaches are permanently ineligible for readmission.
- **Faculty & Divisional Approval:** Formal review and unanimous approval by departmental faculty and the Department Chair.
- **Compliance with Current Admissions Catalog:** Reinstated students must satisfy all published admission requirements in effect at the time of readmission.

Required Reinstatement Appeal Components

To be considered for reinstatement, the student's written appeal must explicitly demonstrate and detail all of the following:

1. **Identification of Root Causes:** A thorough, self-reflective explanation of the specific academic, personal, time-management, or environmental factors that contributed to the prior course failure or withdrawal.
2. **Demonstrated Corrective Action & Growth:** Specific, concrete steps taken since the dismissal to resolve or mitigate those underlying issues (e.g., utilization of academic tutoring, medical/personal health management, adjusted work schedules, or study skills workshops).
3. **Comprehensive Academic Success Plan:** A realistic, actionable plan detailing how the student intends to manage their course load, clinical commitments, study hours, and personal obligations upon readmission to ensure a grade of "C" or better.
4. **Commitment to Program & Professional Standards:** A written reaffirmation of the student's commitment to adhering to all department policies, clinical dress codes, attendance standards, and the NAVTA Code of Ethics.

Appeal Review Notice: Submitting a reinstatement appeal does not guarantee readmission. Reinstatement decisions are made by the Department Faculty Committee based on the strength of the appeal, prior clinical safety records, and available seat capacity in the course cohort.

Section VII: Professional Conduct, Confidentiality & Clinical Standards

Departmental Code of Conduct & NAVTA Ethics

Students enrolled in the Veterinary Assistant Program are entering a medical profession and must demonstrate high standards of ethical, professional, and legal conduct at all times.

Professional Standards & Responsibilities

- **Integrity & Honesty:** Maintain complete honesty and academic integrity in all coursework, clinical duties, and professional interactions.
- **Professional Communication:** Maintain appearance, language, and interpersonal communication consistent with a clinical professional.
- **Non-Judgmental Conduct:** Display respectful, non-judgmental behavior in all interactions with peers, faculty, staff, clinical supervisors, and clients.
- **Punctuality & Reliability:** Maintain punctual attendance at all scheduled academic, laboratory, and clinical activities, adhering strictly to assignment and exam deadlines.
- **Fitness for Duty:** Maintain physical and mental readiness for safe practice. Course instructors reserve the right to assess a student's fitness for duty and remove any student from classroom or clinical settings if safety is compromised.
- **Public Access Restriction:** Students are strictly prohibited from bringing family members, acquaintances, or non-departmental members of the public onto department premises or into clinical spaces.
- **Ethics Code:** Students must abide by the **National Association of Veterinary Assistants in America (NAVTA) Veterinary Assistant Code of Ethics** and the institutional **HCC Student Code of Conduct**.

Mandatory Patient & Client Confidentiality (Privacy Policy)

In accordance with professional standards and medical ethics, all patient and client information encountered during lectures, labs, or clinical experiences is strictly confidential.

Critical Privacy Mandate: Students must never disclose client or patient information to anyone outside those directly involved in that animal's care. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to: client names, addresses, financial/billing records, patient medical histories, diagnostic results, and treatment plans.

- **Private Conversations Only:** Case discussions must occur strictly in private spaces with HCC employees or enrolled students. Discussions in public areas or hallways where third parties might overhear are strictly prohibited.
- **Record Duplication:** Client and medical records may only be duplicated with explicit prior authorization from the attending veterinarian and client.
- **Post-Care Confidentiality:** Information regarding departmental clients or animals remains permanently confidential, even after animals leave the facility or practice.

Immediate Dismissal Notice: A breach of client or patient confidentiality will result in immediate dismissal from the Veterinary Assistant Program.

Institutional Email & Digital Platform (Canvas) Rules

Official electronic communication between the College, faculty, and students must follow strict security and privacy protocols.

Official HCC Email Guidelines

- **Mandatory Usage:** The official college-assigned email account is the **only** recognized channel for communication between students, faculty, and staff. Emails received from personal accounts (e.g., Gmail, Yahoo) will not receive a substantive response; students will be directed to resend from their HCC account.
- **Daily Monitoring:** Students are required to check their HCC email account daily for critical updates regarding program policies, schedules, financial aid, and college announcements.
- **Email Forwarding Prohibition:** Students should not set their HCC email to auto-forward to personal accounts due to security risks and attachment formatting issues.

Canvas & Digital Platform Requirements

- **Daily Canvas Access:** In addition to email, students must check their course Canvas sites daily for announcements, assignment submissions, and course materials.

Electronic Devices & Social Media Prohibitions

Classroom & Laboratory Device Use

- **Cell Phones:** Mobile phones must remain on **silent mode** during lectures, labs, and clinical experiences. Use is restricted to emergency situations only. Texting or personal phone calls during instructional time are prohibited.
 - *Disruptive Use:* Students using phones disruptively during class or lab will be asked to leave and will be marked **absent**.

- **Emergencies:** If responding to an urgent emergency call, the student must step out of the room quietly.
- **Examinations:** Cell phones and unauthorized electronic devices are strictly prohibited during examinations and exam reviews.
- **Laptops & Tablets:** Permitted in class or lab exclusively for note-taking, accessing class materials, or instructor-approved activities.

Social Media & Digital Media Regulations

The Veterinary Assistant Program enforces a **zero-tolerance policy** regarding unauthorized electronic recording, photography, or posting of program-related activities, facilities, personnel, or patients.

Strict Social Media Prohibitions: Students are strictly prohibited from engaging in the following actions on any social media platform (including blogs, forums, personal networking sites, or group chats):

1. **Photos & Videos:** Posting photos or videos of themselves, faculty, staff, clients, patients, or off-campus clinical/externship facilities.
2. **Location Check-Ins:** Tagging or "checking in" at any off-campus clinical or externship site.
3. **Experience Posts:** Sharing or discussing any details regarding clinical or externship experiences online.
4. **Program Documents:** Distributing or displaying official program, department, or clinical facility documents.
5. **Protected Health Data:** Posting any personal health information belonging to students, instructors, clients, or patients.

Consequences: Violations of the social media policy violate professional ethics and client privacy rights, resulting in immediate disciplinary review up to and including **expulsion from the Veterinary Assistant Program**.

Dress Code, Personal Hygiene, & Clinical Attire

Students represent Holyoke Community College and the veterinary profession. Appearance must reflect cleanliness, infection control, and personal safety.

General & Classroom Attire

- **Classroom Standard:** Classroom dress is generally at the discretion of the student, provided it is neat and clean.

- **Footwear Requirement:** Bare feet are strictly prohibited in all college buildings at all times.

Clinical & Laboratory Dress Code

Specific attire requirements vary by laboratory, clinical course, and externship facility. Students must strictly adhere to the designated attire set by each course instructor or clinical facilitator.

- **Scrubs:** Required for many laboratories and clinical sites. Scrubs must be clean, properly fitted, and laundered daily (or replaced immediately if visibly soiled). Undershirts (t-shirts) may be worn beneath scrub tops provided sleeves are not visible.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Coveralls and washable boots required for specific farm or animal labs will be provided or specified by the department.
- **Footwear:** Closed-toe, closed-heel clinical shoes with non-slip soles are mandatory. Open toes, open backs, high heels, winter boots, or shoes with side cutouts are strictly prohibited.
- **Hair & Facial Hair:** Hair must be clean and professionally groomed. Hair shoulder-length or longer must be pulled back off the face and collar for infection control and safety. Facial hair must be neatly trimmed so it can be completely covered by a standard surgical mask.
- **Fingernails:** Nails must be clean and trimmed to a maximum length of **1/4 inch past the fingertip**. Artificial nails and nail polish are prohibited in many lab and clinical environments.
- **Jewelry & Piercings:** Dangling earrings or necklaces are prohibited due to animal snagging hazards. All visible jewelry must be removed in sterile clinical settings.
- **Fragrances & Scents:** Perfumes, colognes, scented lotions, body sprays, and strongly scented soaps are prohibited in classes, labs, and clinical sites due to respiratory sensitivities in humans and animals. Unscented or mild deodorants are permitted.
- **Hygiene & Tobacco Odor:** Students must maintain high standards of personal hygiene and oral care. Students must be free of offensive body odors and cigarette smoke odor.
- **Food, Beverage, & Gum:** Chewing gum, eating, and drinking are prohibited in laboratories and animal clinical areas.
- **Clinical Equipment:** A watch with a sweep second hand (or digital second timer) are recommended for all clinical labs.

Non-Compliance Penalty: A clinical instructor or lab facilitator may dismiss a student from a lab or clinical site for dress code or hygiene non-compliance. Any missed time will be recorded as an **unexcused absence**.

Attendance Policy & Weather Closings / Delay Guidelines

Attendance Policy

- **Mandatory Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory for all scheduled classroom lectures, laboratory sessions, and off-campus clinical experiences.
- **Grade Impact:** Any unexcused absence will negatively affect the student's final course grade.
- **Syllabus Parameters:** Specific criteria regarding excused absences, tardiness, and make-up policies are established by individual instructors in their respective course syllabi.

Campus Closings & Weather Delay Protocols

Decisions regarding campus-wide closures or delayed openings due to severe weather are made by the College President by **6:00 a.m. for day classes** and **4:00 p.m. for evening classes**.

Notifications & Communication:

- **Emergency System:** Students enrolled in HCC's Emergency Notification System will receive automated texts, phone calls, and emails regarding closures.
- **HCC Information Hotline:** Students may call **413-552-2900, ext. 1418** for current cancellation status.
- **Note:** Closures of Holyoke Public Schools do **not** dictate HCC schedules. Broadcast announcements must explicitly state "Holyoke Community College."

Delayed Opening Schedule Rules: Because college classes and clinical labs start at varying times, delayed openings specify an exact opening time (e.g., "Opening at 10:00 a.m.):

- **Classes Starting At or After Opening:** Meet as normally scheduled (*e.g., if campus opens at 10:00 a.m., a 10:00 a.m. class and an 11:00 a.m. class both meet*).
- **Classes Ending Before Opening:** Cancelled (*e.g., if campus opens at 10:00 a.m., a class scheduled from 9:00 a.m. to 9:50 a.m. does not meet*).
- **In-Progress / Overlapping Classes:** If a class or lab period began prior to the delayed opening time but has **45 minutes or more remaining** after the doors open, students must attend for the remainder of the session (*e.g., if campus opens at 9:00 a.m., an 8:00 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. lab will meet starting at 9:00 a.m.*).

Section VIII: Clinical, Externship & Animal Handling Policies

Clinical Externships Overview (VEA 182 / VEA 183)

Students in the Holyoke Community College (HCC) Veterinary Assistant Program are required to successfully complete two formal clinical externships:

- **VEA 182:** Externship for Veterinary Assistants I
- **VEA 183:** Externship for Veterinary Assistants II

Transportation & Liability Insurance Requirements

- **Transportation:** Students are solely responsible for securing their own reliable transportation to and from all off-campus clinical externship sites.
- **Malpractice Insurance:** Students must pay the mandatory fee for HCC-provided professional liability/malpractice insurance coverage prior to beginning any externship placement.
- **Field Trips & Off-Campus Labs:** For any courses involving off-campus practical experiences, field trips, or lab exercises, while the Program or College may occasionally offer group transportation when available, **transportation cannot be guaranteed for all students or all off-campus trips**. Students must be prepared to provide or arrange their own transportation when College-provided transportation is unavailable.

Biosecurity & Separate Scrub Attire Policy

- Students must maintain a separate set of scrub uniforms exclusively for their off-campus externship sites.
- **Strict Requirement:** Do **not** wear the same scrubs at your off-campus externship site that you wear during on-campus laboratory sessions. Wearing dedicated, clean scrubs at off-campus facilities prevents cross-contamination and maintains proper biosecurity protocols between campus animals and clinical patients.

Professional Conduct & Site Evaluations

- **Professional Conduct & Appearance:** A professional appearance, attire, and demeanor must be maintained at all times while representing HCC at clinical sites. Any unprofessional, unethical, or unsafe conduct on a student's part may result in immediate removal and withdrawal from the externship, as well as potential disciplinary action within the Program, which may include dismissal from the Program.

- **Site Evaluations:** At the conclusion of each externship placement, the supervising clinical provider will complete a formal **Student Externship Evaluation Form** assessing the student's clinical skills, professionalism, and performance.
- **Faculty Communication:** If any issues, conflicts, health concerns, or questions arise during an externship placement, the student must promptly bring them to the attention of the **VEA 182 / VEA 183 Course Instructor**.

Animal Restraint & Handling Safety Rules

Working with a wide variety of species is an essential component of veterinary assistant training. Animals may react unpredictably or aggressively due to fear, pain, injury, medical procedures, or novel environments. The primary goal of the Veterinary & Animal Science Department is to ensure that all human-animal interactions are conducted safely and humanely.

General Restraint & Safety Guidelines

- **Universal Precautions:** Approach all animals, including dogs, cats, birds, rodents, horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, and goats, with the same caution required in professional veterinary practice.
- **Awareness of Sensitive Areas:** Even docile, familiar animals may bite, scratch, or kick if startled or touched in sensitive areas (*e.g., paws, ears, mouth, abdomen, or injured sites*).
- **Adequate Restraint Required:** Ensure an animal is appropriately and safely restrained prior to initiating any diagnostic, nursing, or therapeutic procedure. If you are uncertain about the appropriate restraint technique, immediately seek guidance from your course instructor or externship supervisor.
- **No Manual Fight Interventions:** Never attempt to manually break up fighting animals with your bare hands or body.
- **Addressing Animal Fears:** If you feel fearful or uncomfortable handling a specific animal or species, communicate your concerns promptly with your instructor.
- **Removal of Aggressive Animals:** Any animal demonstrating unmanageable aggression will be immediately removed from active use in the Program. Report any signs of dangerous or aggressive behavior to your instructor or the Department Chair.
- **Public Interaction Restriction:** Students are strictly prohibited from inviting members of the public (who are not employed by HCC or enrolled in the class) to interact with program animals.

Section IX: Occupational Safety & Environmental Health

Substance Abuse Policies & Federal DEA Regulations

1. Institutional Substance Abuse Prevention Policy

The Veterinary Assistant Program strictly adheres to Holyoke Community College's institutional policies regarding alcohol and drug prevention.

- **Prohibited Conduct:** The illegal possession, use, manufacture, or distribution of drugs and/or alcohol by students on college property, at college-sponsored events, or during off-campus clinical experiences (including field trips and **VEA 182 / VEA 183** externships) is strictly prohibited.
- **Full Policy Reference:** All students enrolled in the Veterinary Assistant Program are expected to read and comply with the comprehensive policy outlined in the official HCC Student Handbook at the following link: [HCC Student Handbook](#).

2. Institutional Marijuana Policy

Although Massachusetts state law permits the medical and recreational use, possession, and cultivation of marijuana in limited amounts, **marijuana remains strictly prohibited on all Holyoke Community College property and at all college-sponsored activities.**

Federal Legal Framework & Compliance:

- **Federal Classification:** Under federal law, including the **Controlled Substances Act of 1970**, the **Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988**, and the **Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989**, marijuana remains classified as a Schedule I illegal narcotic.
- **Federal Funding Requirement:** As an institution of higher education receiving federal financial assistance and grants, HCC is required by federal law to maintain and enforce strict policies prohibiting the possession, use, distribution, and cultivation of marijuana.

Campus & Clinical Prohibition: The possession, use, distribution, or cultivation of marijuana (including medical marijuana) remains strictly prohibited on all Community College property, during laboratory sessions, and at off-campus clinical or externship sites.

Disciplinary Action: Violations of this policy subject students to immediate disciplinary review under the system-wide Student Code of Conduct, up to and including removal from clinical placements, suspension, or expulsion from the College.

3. Notice of Controlled Substances Act & Future Employment Implications

Veterinary assistants may routinely handle, record, and store Schedule II–V controlled substances under the supervision of licensed veterinarians. Students must be aware of federal regulations governing employment in facilities that hold Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) registrations.

Federal DEA Restrictions (21 CFR Section 1301.76): According to Title 21 of the Code of Federal Regulations (**21 CFR § 1301.76**), a DEA permit holder (including veterinary hospitals, research facilities, animal clinics, and pharmacies) **cannot employ** any individual as an agent or employee with access to controlled substances who:

1. Has been **convicted of a felony** relating to controlled substances;
2. Has had an application for registration with the DEA **denied**;
3. Has had a DEA registration **revoked**; or
4. Has **surrendered a DEA registration for cause**.

Impact on Career & Employment Opportunities:

- **Background Screening by Employers:** While HCC may perform required CORI/SORI checks for clinical placement purposes, the College does not pre-screen applicants for future DEA employment eligibility. However, pre-employment criminal background screening and drug testing are standard practices among veterinary clinics, hospitals, and research institutions.
- **Career Consequences:** A prior felony conviction related to controlled substances or a history of DEA registration denial/revocation may permanently prevent a graduate from working in veterinary practices where access to controlled substances is required.
- **Student Privacy:** This notice is provided purely for educational and career planning purposes. Students are **not required** to disclose past controlled substance histories to Holyoke Community College.

Animal Bite Wounds, Scratches & Exposure Protocols

Safety Equipment & Facility Features

HCC provides necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) and occupational safety training. Students are required to wear and use mandated safety equipment during all relevant laboratory sessions and clinical exercises.

- **First Aid & Emergency Stations:** First aid kits, chemical spill kits, and eyewash stations are prominently located throughout all department laboratory facilities.
- **Orientation:** Students must familiarize themselves with the exact location and operation of safety equipment during their first laboratory orientation.

Incident & Injury Reporting Protocols

All animal-related injuries, occupational exposures, or accidents, regardless of severity, must be reported immediately to faculty and staff.

Immediate Emergency Numbers:

- **HCC Campus Police (Campus Phone):** Extension **2211**
- **HCC Campus Police (Cell Phone / Off-Campus):** Dial **911** or **413-552-2400** (non-emergency dispatch)
- **Department Chair Office:** **413-552-2459**

Step-by-Step Reporting Procedures: On-Campus Incidents:

1. **Immediate Medical Care:**
 - In a life-threatening emergency, Campus Police will coordinate emergency medical services (EMS).
 - For non-emergency care, the student will be referred to their personal healthcare provider or urgent care clinic of choice.
 - *Financial Note:* The student is responsible for all healthcare costs incurred (both immediate and follow-up care). HCC is not financially responsible for student medical expenses.
2. **Notification:** Notify the Chair of the Department of Veterinary & Animal Sciences immediately at **413-552-2459** with the location, nature of the incident, and individuals involved.
3. **Incident Reporting:**
 - The student and faculty/staff member must complete a **Department Incident Report Form** within **one (1) business day**.
 - Completed student forms are filed in the Department's OSHA binder and forwarded to the Director of Public Safety and the Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs / Dean of Enrollment Management & College Access.
4. **Medical Clearance:** If warranted, the student must provide written medical clearance from a healthcare provider stating they can return to full program activities without restrictions.

Off-Campus Incidents (Externships & Clinical Sites):

1. **Immediate Site Protocol:** Follow the emergency and first-aid protocols established by the host clinical facility.
2. **Medical Treatment:** Seek treatment at an emergency department or personal healthcare provider. The student is responsible for all associated medical costs; neither HCC nor the externship site assumes financial liability.

3. **Faculty & Chair Notification:** Report the incident immediately to the HCC Overseeing Externship Instructor, who will notify the Department Chair.
4. **Documentation:** Complete and submit the **Department Incident Report Form** within **one (1) business day**.
5. **Medical Clearance:** Provide a physician's medical clearance note prior to resuming clinical duties if required.

Specific Protocol for Animal Bite Wounds & Scratches

Animal bites and severe scratches carry significant risk of bacterial infection and zoonotic disease transmission. The following protocol must be initiated immediately:

1. **Immediate First Aid:** For superficial wounds, thoroughly flush and wash the area with warm water and soap for several minutes.
2. **Contact Campus Police & Department Chair:** Initiate emergency or non-emergency calls as outlined above.
3. **Collect Critical Data:** The following information must be recorded on the Incident Report Form:
 - Victim's contact details (name, phone, address)
 - Exact date, time, and physical location of the bite/scratch
 - Animal species and rabies immunization status (both human and animal)
 - Exact anatomical location of the wound and whether the bite was provoked or unprovoked
4. **Mandatory Medical Evaluation:** Non-emergency bite victims must immediately seek evaluation from a medical provider.
5. **Public Health & Animal Control Reporting:**
 - The treating physician is required by law to report human bite exposures to the local Board of Health / Town Health Officer.
 - The local health department notifies the Municipal Animal Inspector / Animal Control Officer, who determines appropriate quarantine procedures under state guidelines.
6. **Public Health Contact References:**
 - **Massachusetts Department of Public Health (24/7 Epidemiologist):** 617-983-6800
 - **MDAR Division of Animal Health (State Veterinarian):** 617-626-1795 / 617-626-1810

Pregnancy & Reproductive Health Policy

Practicing veterinary medicine involves inherent physical and biological hazards, which increase during pregnancy. Hazards include traumatic injury during animal restraint, exposure to waste anesthetic gases, ionizing radiation, hazardous pharmaceuticals, and zoonotic pathogens.

Student Rights & Accommodations

Holyoke Community College provides equal opportunity and reasonable accommodations for pregnant students while ensuring educational requirements are met safely.

- **Early Notification:** Pregnant students are strongly encouraged to inform the Department Chair as early as possible so protective steps and accommodations can be planned.
- **Medical Consultation & Release:** The student must consult their primary care physician/obstetrician immediately and provide a signed medical statement defining specific restrictions or allowable exposure limits.
- **Consultation on Occupational Hazards:** Students should review specific occupational risks with their physician, including:
 - Inhalation anesthetics (*e.g., isoflurane, sevoflurane, or skin absorption of agents like xylazine*)
 - Cytotoxic, teratogenic, or hormone compounds (*e.g., chloramphenicol, prostaglandins, estrogens, insecticides, disinfectants*)
 - Ionizing radiation exposure
 - Zoonotic diseases (*e.g., Toxoplasmosis, Leptospirosis, Brucellosis, Salmonellosis, Lyme disease, Rabies*)
 - Traumatic physical hazards (*e.g., heavy lifting, kicks/bites, or large animal head catch and chute restraint devices*)

Academic Continuation & Leave Options

1. **Academic Completion:** Pregnant students are expected to fulfill all curriculum skill competencies. If certain clinical skills pose high risk, the student, faculty, and physician may formulate an alternate, equivalent learning plan.
2. **Faculty Discretion:** A faculty member may temporarily restrict a pregnant student from participating in specific high-risk activities (*e.g., radiological procedures or large animal chutes*) if safety risks are unacceptably high.
3. **Pregnancy Leave:** If a student chooses to take a leave of absence, they remain eligible for reinstatement into the Program following pregnancy leave, re-enrolling in dropped courses in accordance with the HCC Pregnancy and Childbirth Policy at the following link: [HCC Student Handbook](#).
4. **Professional References:** For detailed occupational guidelines, refer to the following link on Mitigating Hazards in the Veterinary Workplace: [Policy on Mitigating Hazards in the Veterinary Workplace \(2023\)](#).

Laboratory, Chemical, Biological & Radiation Safety Guidelines

- Chemical safety, handling of fixatives/stains, radiological safety (lead aprons, thyroid collars, gloves, beam avoidance), anesthetic gas scavenging, and biological hazard

containment are enforced across all program labs. Non-compliance with safety protocols constitutes a non-negotiable safety violation.

Section X: Emergency Preparedness & Animal Evacuation Protocols

Emergency Communication Infrastructure & Directory

While emergencies cannot always be predicted, familiarity with campus safety infrastructure and procedures significantly enhances personal and community safety.

Key Safety Infrastructure

- **Emergency Guides:** Posted near telephones in every classroom and office on campus. Charts outline step-by-step procedures for various emergency scenarios.
- **Campus Police & Security:** Trained Campus Police officers and Institutional Security Officers are on duty **24 hours a day, 365 days a year**.
- **Emergency Phones & Call Boxes:** Located throughout campus buildings, hallways, and classrooms. Classroom emergency phones feature a yellow-striped instruction card affixed to the top.
- **Online Resources:** Review campus safety updates and planning on the HCC Emergency Preparedness Page at the following link; [HCC Emergency Preparedness Page](#).

Emergency Phone Directory

- **Campus Phone (Emergency):** Dial **2211**
- **Cell Phone / Off-Campus (Emergency):** Dial **911** or **413-552-2211**
- **Campus Phone (Non-Emergency Dispatch):** Dial **2400**
- **Cell Phone / Off-Campus (Non-Emergency):** Dial **413-552-2400**
- **Department Chair (Dr. Jennifer York):** **413-552-2459** (*Office*) | **413-244-4178** (*Cell*) | jyork@hcc.edu
- **Department Lab Technician:** **413-552-2507** (*Office*)

Emergency Notification System

- **Rapid Alert Messaging:** HCC utilizes an automated emergency notification system to send voice, text, and email alerts during active campus emergencies.
- **Student Responsibility:** Students are responsible for maintaining accurate, up-to-date contact details in their student portal to ensure receipt of emergency broadcasts.
- **Rave Guardian Safety App:** Students are strongly encouraged to download the **Rave Guardian App** to discreetly contact security, set safety timers, and request campus escorts.

Active Threat / Active Shooter Response Guidelines

In an active threat situation, determine the safest course of action based on your immediate environment. **Trust your instincts.**

Action Strategy 1: Evacuate (Run)

If a clear and safe escape route exists:

- Warn others in the vicinity to take immediate shelter.
- Leave personal belongings behind and exit the building immediately.
- Call **2211** (campus phone) or **911** (cell phone) as soon as possible, though escaping should be your priority.
- Keep running until fully cleared from the threat area, then call 911 to report your location.
- *Window Escape Consideration:* If forced to exit through a window, assess height, landing surfaces (bushes/grass), or improvised descent tools (clothing/belts) before jumping.

Action Strategy 2: Hide & Barricade (Hide)

If evacuation is impossible or unsafe:

- Move to the nearest office, classroom, or closet that can be locked or secured.
- **Barricade the Door:** Block the door with heavy objects (desks, bookcases). If the door opens outward, secure the handle to a heavy object using a belt, scarf, or rope.
- Cover door windows, turn off lights, close blinds, and stay low to the ground.
- Silence cell phones (vibrate/silent mode). If calling **911**, speak quietly or leave the line open for dispatchers to listen.
- **Do Not Open the Door:** Once secured, do not open the door for anyone until law enforcement officially clears the room.

Action Strategy 3: Swarm & Counter (Fight)

As an absolute last resort when in imminent danger and facing direct aggression:

- Position yourself to allow for an element of surprise.
- Throw available objects at the threat, aiming for the face to distract them.
- Attack as a group, swarming around the threat to take them to the ground using body weight to secure them.
- "Fight dirty" (kick, bite, gouge eyes).
- **Once Apprehended:** Secure the suspect, move weapons away from the threat (*do not hold the weapon yourself*), call **911 / 2211**, and state that the shooter is down.

Law Enforcement Arrival Protocols

When police officers arrive on the scene:

- **Remain Calm & Obey Commands:** Keep hands elevated, visible, and empty at all times. Do not point, scream, yell, or make sudden movements.
- **Expect Screening:** Officers may handcuff or hold individuals temporarily while securing the scene for safety reasons.
- **Provide Critical Intelligence:** Report the location, number of offenders, physical descriptions, and types/number of weapons.

Fire Evacuation Procedures & Disablement Assembly Stations

Fire Evacuation Procedures

1. **Reporting:** If you smell smoke or burning materials, dial **911** immediately. If flames or dense smoke are visible, immediately pull the nearest fire alarm station.
2. **Evacuation Sequence:**
 - Direct students out of the building following the red **EXIT** signs in corridors.
 - Do not use elevators. Do not turn lights or electrical devices on or off.
 - Faculty/staff should verify windows and secondary exits are closed before closing (and leaving unlocked) classroom doors.
3. **Assembly Distance & Specific Meeting Areas:**
 - Do not stay in common areas between buildings. Remain at least **500 feet** away from evacuated structures.
 - **Marieb Building Exits:** If safe, proceed to the far end (North end) of **Lot L**.
 - **Frost Building Exits:** If safe, proceed to the far end (North end) of **Lot L**.
 - **CHE Building Exits:** If safe, proceed to the far end of the parking lot along **Jarvis Avenue**.
4. **No Re-Entry:** Do not return for personal belongings or re-enter the building for any reason until official authorization is given by college officials.

Evacuation Stations for Persons with Disabilities

Under ADA regulations, seven designated **Evacuation Stations** are equipped with evacuation chairs and call buttons to alert emergency responders:

- **Marieb Building:** Room 318
- **Donahue Building:** Rooms 380 and 416
- **Frost Building:** Room 387
- **"C" Building:** Room 333
- **Kittredge Center:** 4th Floor and 5th Floor

Protocol: Individuals using wheelchairs should report immediately to the nearest designated Evacuation Station. Faculty will assist students with mobility issues to stairwell landings. Evacuation team volunteers will report to their stations and send one member to the Frost Building flagpoles to await further instructions.

Chemical Spill Emergency Response

Immediate Spill Response

- **Evacuate & Alarm:** Activate the building fire alarm and evacuate immediately via marked routes. Do not use elevators.
- **Reporting:** Call Campus Police at **2211** (campus phone) or **413-552-2211 / 911** (cell phone). Provide chemical details, location, and injury count.
- **Isolation:** If safe, seal off the contaminated area, close doors/windows, turn off lab gases/exhaust fans, and eliminate ignition sources for flammable spills.

Chemical First Aid

- **Skin/Eye Exposure:** Flush affected skin or eyes with water at an emergency station for **no less than 15 minutes**. Remove contaminated clothing immediately.
- **Toxic Symptoms:** Seek immediate emergency care if experiencing difficulty breathing, eye/skin/throat irritation, dizziness, headache, or skin color changes.
- **Isolation of Exposed Persons:** Exposed individuals must wait in a safe, designated outdoor area for Campus Police and emergency personnel to arrive to prevent cross-contamination.

Resident Teaching Animal Evacuation Protocols (By Species, Surgery, After-Hours, Escape)

Human safety is paramount. **OSHA guidelines dictate that human life must never be risked to save a non-human animal.** However, when time and safety permit, program animals will be evacuated according to established departmental procedures.

Animal Locations on Campus

- **Dogs:** Kennel facility adjacent to the North side of the Marieb Building (*or Marieb 236 / Surgical Suite*).
- **Cats:** Marieb Building, Room 238 (*or Marieb 236 / Surgical Suite*).
- **Small Animals (Birds, Rodents, Rabbits):** Marieb Building, Room 232.

Environmental & Power Interruptions

- **Temperature Parameters:** Housing areas for all species must be maintained between **60°F and 85°F**.
- **HVAC Failure:** If heating/cooling fails, temporary fans may be deployed while Facilities is notified. If power outages exceed **6 hours** or ambient temperatures fall outside allowable limits, formal animal evacuation will be initiated.
- **Environmental Notifications:** Program personnel must be notified immediately of changes in water/feed supply or environmental conditions, and notified in advance of planned utility shut-offs.

Species Evacuation Protocol (7 AM – 3 PM Academic Hours)

1. **Cats, Rabbits, Chickens, & Small Animals (Rooms 232 & 238):**
 - *Cats:* Individual portable carriers (found in Marieb 238) -> Courtyard
 - *Rabbits & Chickens:* Individual carriers (found in Marieb 232) -> Courtyard
 - *Small Rodents & Other Birds:* Transport in housing cages -> Courtyard
 - Move to volunteer vehicles / HCC vans if weather is inclement, delay > 1 hr, or campus evacuation is required.
2. **Dogs (Kennels):**
 - Secure on individual leashes (hooks in kennel / Marieb 236 lab).
 - Remain in kennels unless the kennel facility or campus is unsafe.
 - Transport via volunteer vehicles / HCC vans to designated off-site facilities.

Primary Off-Site Animal Evacuation Facilities

If campus-wide evacuation is mandated, animals will be transported to:

1. **Holyoke Animal Hospital:** 320 Easthampton Rd, Holyoke, MA 01040
2. **Thomas J. O'Connor Animal Control & Adoption Center:** 627 Cottage St, Springfield, MA 01104

Surgical / Anesthesia Emergency Protocol

If an evacuation alarm sounds while an animal is undergoing surgery under general anesthesia:

1. **Field Transport Procedure:** Disconnect the animal from the anesthesia machine, transfer the patient to a gurney with the crash box, and move to the parking lot.
2. **Field Anesthesia Care:** Maintain injectable anesthesia, apply sterile drapes over surgical sites, and administer pain management under the direction of the attending surgeon.
3. **Transport / Euthanasia Decision:** If safe, transport the patient to Holyoke Animal Hospital for surgical completion. If moving the patient poses an unacceptable risk to

human life or animal welfare, the patient will be humanely euthanized on the table, and all personnel will evacuate immediately.

After-Hours Animal Evacuation (After 3 PM, Weekends, & Holidays)

1. Campus Police will notify the Department Chair (Dr. Jennifer York) and the Lab Technician (Christine O'Neill).
2. If time permits, designated program personnel will execute evacuation.
3. If staff are delayed, Campus Police will perform animal evacuation using portable carriers/leashes and temporarily house animals in HCC vans located near the Bartley Center until transport is arranged.

Animal Escape Protocol

In the event an animal escapes from campus custody:

1. Immediately notify the Department Lab Technician or Department Chair.
2. Contact **Thomas J. O'Connor Animal Control** at **413-781-1484 x 1** to file an official lost report.
3. Email photo and detailed identification data to: info@tjoconnoradoptioncenter.com.

Section XI: Animal Welfare & IACUC Reporting Guidelines

Institutional Commitment to Humane Animal Care

Holyoke Community College (HCC) and the Department of Veterinary & Animal Science are committed to maintaining full, open, and transparent communications regarding animal care and use across all teaching programs.

- **Humane Treatment Standards:** All animals utilized in HCC programs (including dogs, cats, small mammals, livestock, and avian species) must be handled, housed, treated, cared for, and transported in a humane and ethical manner.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Animal care protocols strictly adhere to all applicable federal, state, and institutional regulations, as well as accrediting body standards.

Reporting Non-Compliance or Care Concerns

Any student, faculty member, staff member, or member of the public who has reason to question the treatment of animals in any HCC program may report perceived non-compliance or animal welfare concerns directly to the **Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)**.

How Concerns Are Handled

- **Confidentiality:** All reported concerns, complaints, and documentation are handled confidentially to the fullest extent permitted by policy and law.
- **IACUC Review:** All complaints are brought directly to the attention of the IACUC.
- **Investigative Assessment:** As appropriate, the IACUC will assemble an impartial investigative team to conduct a balanced, thorough, and timely assessment of the reported concern.

IACUC Contacts & Whistleblower Protections

You may report animal welfare concerns to the IACUC Chair, the Attending Veterinarian, or any member of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee:

- **IACUC Chair:**
 - *Phone:* [Insert IACUC Chair Phone Number]
 - *Email:* [Insert IACUC Chair Email Address]
- **IACUC Attending Veterinarian:**
 - **Name:** Dr. Jennifer York, DVM
 - **Phone:** 413-552-2459
 - **Email:** jyork@hcc.edu

Whistleblower Protection & Federal Regulations

Reporting individuals are fully protected under federal law against retaliation or adverse action.

Federal Regulatory Authority (Animal Welfare Act): Under the Code of Federal Regulations (**9 CFR § 2.31(c)(4)**), the IACUC is granted explicit authority to:

"Review, and if warranted, investigate concerns involving the care and use of animals at the facility resulting from public complaints received and from reports of non-compliance received from facility personnel or employees."

Strict Anti-Retaliation & Whistleblower Protection:

- **Protection Against Reprisal:** Animal Welfare Act (AWA) regulations mandate that students, faculty, and institutional personnel **shall not be discriminated against or subjected to any reprisal** for reporting potential violations of any regulation or standard under the AWA.
- **Zero Tolerance for Threats:** Holyoke Community College strictly prohibits any form of threat, harassment, intimidation, or reprisal against anyone reporting perceived animal mistreatment or regulatory non-compliance in good faith.

Section XII: Student Support Services & Program Evaluation

Accessibility & Disability Services (OSDDS)

Holyoke Community College is committed to the full inclusion of all students. Students with a documented disability are encouraged to contact the **Office for Students with Disabilities and Deaf Services (OSDDS)** to arrange an intake appointment and establish official academic accommodations.

- **Office Phone:** 413-552-2417
- **Video Phone (Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing):** 413-650-5502

Proactive Accommodation Notice: Effective collaboration between the student, OSDDS, and program faculty is essential for delivering timely support. Students are strongly urged to provide their official Accommodation Agreement to their course instructors during the **first week of the semester** or immediately following OSDDS approval.

Program Evaluation & Alumni/Employer Surveys

Student feedback is vital to maintaining the high quality and accreditation standards of the Veterinary Assistant Program. All evaluation data remains **strictly anonymous** and directly informs departmental curriculum updates, resource allocations, and administrative policies.

Evaluation Mechanisms

- **Faculty Evaluations:** Administered systematically in accordance with MCCC contract guidelines.
- **Adjunct Faculty Evaluations:** Facilitated by the college each semester to evaluate adjunct instructional staff.
- **Graduate & Employer Surveys:** A comprehensive questionnaire is sent to program alumni **9 to 12 months after graduation**. Data gathered tracks employment rates, credentialing success, and curriculum efficacy for accrediting bodies (such as the AVMA-CVTEA).

Scholarships, Recognition, & Awards

Scholarships

Veterinary Assistant students are eligible to apply annually for **HCC Foundation Scholarships** and general college scholarships.

- **Funding Range:** Typical awards range from **\$500 to \$2,000** per academic year.
- **Application Process:** Students complete a single centralized online application to be considered for over 100 endowed funds, including several explicitly reserved for Veterinary Assistant majors.

Departmental Honors & Ceremony Awards

Graduating seniors in the Veterinary Assistant Program may be nominated for two premier honors presented at the annual *HCC Honors and Awards Ceremony*:

1. **The Award for Excellence in Veterinary Science:** Presented to a graduating student who demonstrates outstanding academic achievement, clinical mastery, and professional leadership throughout the program.
2. **The Emma Hartley Cote '18, CVT Memorial Award:** Established in memory of Emma Hartley Cote—a 2018 graduate whose passion for equine care, resilience, empathy, and joyful spirit touched countless human and animal lives. This award recognizes a graduating student who exemplifies Emma's extraordinary compassion, humor, and unwavering dedication to patient care and client communication.

Comprehensive Student Support Resources

HCC offers a wide array of academic, technical, personal, and financial support networks to ensure every student thrives throughout their academic journey. A full list of current support services can be found on the HCC Student Support page at the following link: [Support | Holyoke Community College](#).

Academic & Technical Resources

- **HCC IT Help Desk:** Campus Support & Online Portal — Assistance with student email, Canvas access, single sign-on, and account password resets.
- **Center for Academic Program Support (CAPS):** Academic Support Center — Free peer and professional tutoring, Math/Writing centers, learning coaches, study groups, and supplemental instruction.
 - *Academic Tip:* Do not wait until you are falling behind to seek academic support. Connect with CAPS at the very first sign of difficulty in a course.

Specialized & Identity-Based Support Programs

- **ALANA Men in Motion:** Academic support, mentoring, and counseling designed for African American, Latino, Asian, and Native American male students.

- **El Centro:** Culturally responsive guidance, holistic advocacy, and academic support tailored for Latinx students.
- **ESL Support Services:** Specialized coursework and language support to enhance academic English proficiency.
- **New Directions for Adult Learners:** Targeted guidance for students age 24 and older, parents, veterans, and individuals returning to school after an extended break.
- **Pathways Program:** Academic counseling and transfer guidance for students aiming to transfer to selective liberal arts institutions (e.g., Amherst, Mount Holyoke, Smith, Hampshire).
- **TRIO Student Support Services:** Dedicated retention services for first-generation college students, low-income students, or individuals with documented disabilities.

Campus Life, Health, & Basic Needs Resources

- **Mental Health & Counseling Center:** Free, confidential professional counseling to assist students with personal challenges, academic stress, and crisis management.
- **Thrive Student Resource Center:** Confidential assistance with basic needs insecurity, SNAP/MassHealth application navigation, personal budgeting, credit building, and legal assistance.
- **Food Pantry & Homestead Market:** Located on the 2nd floor of the Frost Building, offering fresh produce, grab-and-go meals, and household basics. **SNAP benefits accepted!**
- **President's Student Emergency Fund:** Grants designed to assist students facing unexpected financial emergencies (e.g., car repairs, utility bills) that threaten their continued enrollment.
- **Career Closet:** Provides free, professional business attire for job and clinical site interviews.
- **Menstrual Equity Project:** Free menstrual products stocked across all major campus restrooms.
- **On-Campus Dining Options:** POD Express (Donahue Building) and Forum Cafe (Fine & Performing Arts Building).

Family, Childcare, & Housing Services

- **The Kids' Place:** Nationally accredited, year-round, full-time childcare located directly on campus for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers (7:00 AM – 5:30 PM). Contact: holyoke@thekidsplace.org | **413-538-7742**.
- **Itsy Bitsy Child Watch:** Short-term, drop-in care for children (6 weeks to 12 years old) while parents attend a single class or support appointment on campus.
- **AIC Residence Hall Housing:** Official partnership allowing full-time HCC students to reside in residence halls and apartments on the American International College (AIC) campus in Springfield. Contact: tstewart@hcc.edu | **413-552-2162**.

Appendix: NAVTA Essential & Recommended Skills List

NAVTA Essential Skills (July 1, 2023 Revision)

Skills requiring hands-on demonstration are italicized and bolded

I. Office and Hospital Procedures

A. Front Desk

- 1. Greet Clients**
- 2. Demonstrate proper Appointment Scheduling and make appointments**
- 3. Prepare appropriate forms and certificates for signature**
- 4. Admitting patient**
- 5. Discharge Patient**
- 6. Perform basic filing and retrieving of medical records**
- 7. Perform basic veterinary medical record keeping procedures**
- 8. Demonstrate elementary computer skills**
- 9. Utilize basic medical terminology and abbreviations**
- 10. Perform basic invoicing, billing, and payment on account procedures**

B. Telephone

- 1. Answer and direct phone call**
- 2. Recognize and respond appropriately to veterinary medical emergencies by notifying the appropriate hospital personnel**
- 3. Request records and information from other veterinary facilities**

C. Maintain basic cleanliness and orderliness of a veterinary facility

- 1. Inventory supplies**
- 2. Restock Shelves**
- 3. Perform basic filing and retrieving of medical records, radiographs, lab reports, etc.**
- 4. Demonstrate basic sanitation and disinfection techniques of animal kennels and bedding, examination rooms, hospital facilities, and surgical suites.**

II. Communication and Client Relations

A. Develop effective Client communication skills

B. Use professional communication (written and electronic) with clients and colleagues

C. Understand ethical conduct in relationship to the day-to-day operations of a vet hospital

D. Describe the roles and responsibilities of each member of the veterinary health team and the important part that each play in the delivery of excellent care

E. Professional Conduct

- 1. Understand the human-animal bond and responding to clients in various stages of grief**
- 2. Demonstrate professional and appropriate appearance and language in the workplace**
- 3. Demonstrate appropriate use of ethical electronic communication in the workplace (cell phone usage, text messaging, social networking, digital photography, etc.)**

III. Pharmacy and Pharmacology

A. Legal Issues and basic pharmacy skills for the Veterinary Assistant

- 1. Recognize legal issues involving all drugs (controlled and non-controlled) in the workplace**

2. Categorize general types and groups of drugs (i.e.: antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, etc.)
 3. Differentiate prescription drugs from over-the-counter drugs
 4. Recognize common pharmacy abbreviations
- B. Filling medications and inventory control
- 1. Read and interpret a prescription**
 - 2. Label and package dispensed drugs using the correct terminology**
 - 3. Safely handle, store, and dispose of biological and therapeutic agents, pesticides, and hazardous waste**
 - 4. Perform inventory control procedures (i.e.: restocking, consulting out-of-stock "want list")**
 - 5. Evaluate medication containers/ bottles for expiration dates**
- C. Vaccinations
- 1. Demonstrate reconstitution of vaccines**
 2. Describe possible routes and methods of drug and vaccine administration that the veterinarian or veterinary technician may choose
- IV. Examination Room Procedures**
- A. Restrain Patients
1. Small Animals
 - a. Place and remove small animals from cages**
 - b. Place and restrain small animals on tables and floor**
 - c. Apply dog and cat safety muzzle**
 - d. Apply Elizabethan collar**
 - e. Demonstrate knowledge of restraint pole usage (simulation on stuffed animal is appropriate)**
 - f. Demonstrate standing, sitting, lateral, sternal, and dorsal restraint positions**
 - g. Recognize when to alter normal restraint for compromised patients in the exam room (i.e. contagious diseases, medical/ emergency conditions, behavior concerns) and describe appropriate action or personnel to notify
 - 2. Restrain Birds, Rabbits, Pocket Pets, Reptiles, and other Exotics (Optional)**
 - 3. Large Animals (Optional)**
 - a. Halter, tie, and lead horses**
 - b. Restrain horses, cattle, sheep, goats, and swine**
 - c. Operate cattle chute**
- B. Basic Procedures
- 1. Take an accurate history and report chief complaint**
 - 2. Determine patient temperature, pulse, respiration rate, body condition score, and weight**
 - 3. Evaluate mucous membrane color and determine capillary refill time (CRT)**
 - 4. Trim nails (Required: Cats and Dogs. Optional: Birds and Exotics)**
 5. Recognize AKC dog breeds and CFA cat breeds
 - 6. Be able to properly identify the gender of small animal species, particularly felines**
 7. Be familiar with small animal nutritional requirements, therapeutic diets, pet food labeling standards, dry matter basis calculations, and the differences between pet food products
- V. Small Animal Nursing (Large Animal Nursing--Optional)**

A. Safety Concerns

1. Demonstrate knowledge of basic normal and abnormal animal behavior
- 2. Utilize patient & personnel safety measures**
3. Identify potential Zoonotic diseases
4. Describe isolation procedures
5. Describe basic sanitation as associated with animal handling and clinical care including cleaning and disinfecting cages and kennels (stalls optional) and proper waste disposal
6. Be familiar with OSHA standards and demonstrate knowledge of SDS documents

B. Animal Care

- 1. Provide routine record-keeping, and observation of hospitalized patients (i.e.: stress importance of notations made when cleaning and feeding)**
2. Demonstrate understanding of a treatment plan
3. Demonstrate a basic understanding of small animal anatomy and common diseases and medical conditions.
- 4. Monitor and record observations on patients receiving fluid therapy**
- 5. Perform hand pilling (dog and cat)**
- 6. Administer oral liquid medication (dog and cat)**
- 7. Clean external ear canals**
- 8. Apply ear and eye medication**
- 9. Apply and remove simple bandages (i.e.: following venipuncture, IVC removal; equine leg and tail wraps - optional)**
- 10. Brush patients and trim mats**
- 11. Express anal sacs using ONLY the external method**
- 12. Perform therapeutic bathing, basic grooming, and dipping of small animals**
- 13. Prepare food & prescription diets (i.e. special dietary needs for hospitalized patients)**
- 14. Provide care & maintenance of nursing equipment (i.e., basic thermometer; otoscope/ophthalmoscope-if available)**
15. Demonstrate an understanding of euthanasia and post-mortem care

VI. Surgical Preparation and Assisting

A. Assist in performing surgical preparation of small animals

- 1. Prepare surgical equipment/supplies in advance of procedures**
- 2. Demonstrate the aseptic unwrapping of sterile packaging (i.e.: peel pouches, packs, suture)**
- 3. Assist the veterinarian and/or veterinary technician with preparation of surgical patients using aseptic technique**
- 4. Assist with positioning of surgical patients**
- 5. Identify common surgical instruments**
- 6. Identify common suture materials, types, and sizes**
- 7. Aid the veterinarian/and or veterinary technician with physical monitoring of recovering surgical patients**
- 8. Maintain the Surgical Log**

B. Surgical Suite and Equipment Cleanliness

- 1. Demonstrate proper operating room conduct and asepsis**

- 2. Demonstrate knowledge of scrubbed vs. non-scrubbed personnel attire and protocols**
- 3. Perform post-surgical clean up and disposal of tissues, linens, and waste**
- 4. Properly launder and fold surgical gowns and drapes for sterilization**
- 5. Sterilize instruments & sanitize supplies using appropriate methods**
- 6. Operate and maintain autoclaves**
- 7. Carry out operating room sanitation and maintenance**

VII. Laboratory Procedures

A. Assistance in the laboratory

- 1. Collect voided urine samples and store properly to prevent contamination and degradation**
- 2. Determine physical properties of urine including color and clarity**
- 3. Assist through restraint and supply preparation in the collection of blood samples**
- 4. Identify common blood tubes and preservatives used in veterinary medicine**
- 5. Prepare and spin microhematocrit tubes for evaluation by DVM or Veterinary Technician**
- 6. Collect voided fecal samples for examination and store properly to prevent contamination and degradation**
- 7. Prepare fecal flotation solutions and set up fecal flotations and direct smears for examination by the Veterinarian or Veterinary Technician**
- 8. Understand the role of the veterinary assistant in necropsy procedures**
- 9. Explain how to safely handle rabies suspects & samples in accordance with state law**
- 10. Describe methods for aseptically handling the disposal of deceased animals**
- 11. Identify common external parasites: differentiate between the mite, louse, flea, and tick (individual species identification is not necessary on the Vet Assistant level)**
- 12. Assist in the preparation of various specimen staining techniques**
- 13. Maintain cleanliness and order in laboratory environment to prevent contamination**
- 14. Understand and demonstrate proper use of Personal Protection Equipment appropriate to the laboratory environment**

B. Laboratory Record Keeping

- 1. Ensure all laboratory results are accurately recorded**
- 2. Stock laboratory supplies and recognize and remove all expired items for proper disposal**
- 3. File laboratory reports**
- 4. Maintain laboratory log**

VIII. Radiography & Ultrasound Imaging

- A. Follow recommended safety measures for all methods of Diagnostic imaging including donning of proper PPE (gown, gloves, thyroid guard, and dosimeter badge)**
 - B. Assist the veterinarian and/or the veterinary technician in the completion of diagnostic radiographs and ultrasound including the restraint, preparation, and positioning of patients.**
- *NAVTA recommends the Veterinary Assistant be familiar with restraint for the following basic radiography and ultrasound positions (in lieu of live animals, programs may use adequate simulation of restraint for such positional training).**
- 1. Restraint for positioning for Lateral thoracic and abdominal views**
 - 2. Restraint for positioning for Ventro-Dorsal (VD) Thoracic and Abdominal views**
 - 3. Restraint for positioning for lateral extremity and cranio-caudal (AP) views**

- C. Maintain quality control of images to avoid retakes.
- D. Label, file, and store film or digital radiographs
- E. Properly care for radiography equipment
- F. Care and maintenance of film cassettes and screens (optional)
- G. Know safety techniques for handling processing chemicals (optional)
- H. Assist in the processing of diagnostic radiographs using:
 - 1. Manual dipping tank processing OR
 - 2. Automatic Processor OR
 - 3. Digital processing
- I. Maintain X-Ray log

Section XIII: Program Waivers & Signature Forms

Handbook Revision: July 2026

1. Handbook Acknowledgment & Academic Standards

By signing this agreement, I acknowledge that I have received, read, understand, and agree to abide by the policies, procedures, academic standards, and ethical codes detailed in:

- The Holyoke Community College (HCC) Veterinary Technician and Veterinary Assistant Student Handbooks
- The general HCC Student Handbook
- The National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) Code of Ethics

I understand that fulfillment and sign-off of all AVMA/CVTEA or NAVTA Essential Skills is mandatory for program progression and graduation.

2. Assumption of Risk & Health Requirements

- **Zoonotic Disease Risks:** Working with animals carries inherent risks of exposure to zoonotic diseases, including but not limited to Rabies, Tetanus, Leptospirosis, Toxoplasmosis, Cat Scratch Disease, Psittacosis, West Nile Virus, Salmonella, Lyme Disease, Ringworm, and intestinal parasites. I accept responsibility for following all safety protocols to minimize my risk.
- **Vaccination & Health Responsibilities:** I understand that I could be vaccinated for diseases for which human vaccines exist (including, but not limited to, rabies and tetanus). I understand that rabies is endemic in Massachusetts. Proof of rabies vaccination is mandatory for Vet Tech program enrollment and recommended for Vet Assistant Program enrollment. I accept full financial responsibility for all required and recommended personal vaccinations, titers, and health insurance coverage.
- **Physical Hazards:** I acknowledge the risk of traumatic physical injury, including animal bites, scratches, kicks, and equipment-related hazards (e.g., radiological equipment, anesthetic gases, electrical devices). I will not hold the Veterinary & Animal Science Department at Holyoke Community College, including its faculty, staff, students, or administrators, responsible in the event such an injury is incurred in carrying out functions of my education or profession.

3. Waiver of Liability, Benefits, & Indemnification

- **Student Status & Insurance:** I participate voluntarily in this HCC Vet & Animal Science Department Program as a student, not an employee. In consideration of being allowed to participate in this program, I agree to maintain health and personal injury insurance as required by HCC's student policies. I am not entitled to workers' compensation, sick leave, industrial accident coverage, or health benefits from HCC for injuries sustained during academic or clinical coursework.
- **Release of Liability:** I understand the dangers and hazards inherent in participating in this HCC Veterinary & Animal Science Department Program. I further understand that neither Holyoke Community College, its Board of Trustees, nor their employees and agents shall be liable to me for any injury or harm that I may suffer or cause while participating in the program. I recognize, understand, and agree that **I am fully responsible for the costs of any injury.** I release, hold harmless, and indemnify Holyoke Community College, the HCC Board of Trustees, the

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Board of Higher Education, and their employees or clinical agents from any claims, suits, financial obligations, or liabilities arising from injuries, illness, or property damage incurred during my participation in the program.

4. Photo, Video, & Social Media Release

- **Grant of Permission & Usage:** I grant Holyoke Community College (HCC), its legal representatives, employees, and authorized agents the absolute right and permission to copyright, use, reuse, publish, and republish video footage, photographs, portraits, or likenesses of me (in whole or in part, in color or black and white).
- **Approved Media & Advertising:** Materials may be used across any media now or hereafter known—including college websites, social media accounts, print publications, electronic advertisements, or any other promotional and educational materials—in conjunction with my own name or a fictitious name.
- **Waiver of Inspection Rights:** I waive any right to inspect, review, or approve the finished video footage, photographs, advertising copy, or printed/distributed materials before or after their publication.
- **Release & Hold Harmless:** I release, discharge, and agree to hold harmless HCC, its employees, legal representatives, publishers, and distributors from any liability, claims, or demands arising out of image alterations, blurring, distortions, optical illusions, or composite edits that may occur during taking, processing, reproduction, or publication.
- **Age & Legal Capacity Representation:** I warrant that I am at least 18 years of age, fully competent to contract in my own name, and have read and fully understand all terms set forth in this agreement.
 - ☐ **AGREE** — I grant photo/media permission as described above.
 - ☐ **DECLINE** — I do not grant photo/media permission. (*Declining does not affect program admission or standing*).

Master Agreement & Signature Block

Submission Deadline: This signed agreement must be returned to the Veterinary and Animal Science Department Chair prior to the first day of classes. Failure to submit this form may result in administrative removal from VET- or VEA-prefix courses.

By signing below, I certify that I am at least 18 years of age, legally competent, and fully agree to all terms, risks, waivers, and policies outlined in Sections 1 through 4 above.

Student Printed Name: _____

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____