

Getting experience in Government

Veterinary student guide to work experience opportunities in UK Government

Introduction

The Government Veterinary Surgeons (GVS) network brings together vets working across all government departments and agencies, which employ veterinary surgeons, including the devolved administrations, in Great Britain.

The diverse work of government vets ranges from providing veterinary advice on disease prevention and control, promotion of animal welfare, assurance of food quality, regulation of veterinary medicine and providing support for human health and security.

Government vets are employed across a range of Departments and agencies including:

- Animal Health
- Central Science Laboratories (CSL)
- Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS)
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
- Department for International Development (DfID)
- Food Standards Agency (FSA)
- Home Office (HO)
- Meat Hygiene Service (MHS)
- Ministry of Defence (MoD)
- Scottish Government
- Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA)
- Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)
- Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)
- The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for Northern Ireland (DARDNI) also contributes to the activities of the GVS.

Gaining experience in Government

Opportunities are available for veterinary students studying in the UK and for some overseas students to gain experience of field, laboratory and policy related veterinary roles in government. Because of the nature of government work, students need to accept the level of security and health and safety requirements if they are accepted for a placement of any type. In most cases students will attend their placement as an 'accompanied visitor' and will not require additional insurance cover.



Final year veterinary students networking from across the UK

Experience in government: the options

There are three main types of experience available with Government departments.

EMS - Extra-Mural Studies

This experience forms part of the curriculum requirement in relation to work-based experience for veterinary students in the UK. Agencies are only able to accept fourth year students on EMS placement. Most students will benefit from field based or laboratory work and Animal Health and VLA are the two key providers and co-ordinators for EMS in government. Places are limited and students will need to plan the timing of their placement.

Internships

Internships are intended for veterinary students undertaking intercalated or early post-graduate degrees in infectious diseases, veterinary public health or related studies. Final year students will also be considered for internship places. Students can only be accepted if they have been nominated by their Director of Studies (or equivalent) and will be formally supervised for a set period - usually one month. Defra provides a co-ordination point for internships but there may be opportunities for students to visit or be based with the VLA, Animal Health, FSA or other government departments. Students are required to maintain a diary and produce a reflective written and oral presentation on completion of their internship for the host department. Limited places are available.

Research projects

A small number of supervised student research project places may be available from time to time. These may be projects initiated by students on intercalated degree programmes or in early post-graduate fields or may be projects made available for students to contribute to by the host department. Research project opportunities will be based within particular work areas and may be based with policy or field based areas. Please note these are intended as supervised student projects only and do not attract any additional funding.



Luisa Aneiros Gene in 2007, a final year student at the College of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Sciences of the University of Sao Paulo (FMVZ-USP)

Benefits of experience in Government

For students:

- Provides work experience in a field of interest
- Provides potential work-related references
- An opportunity for networking across other government departments and establishing contacts for the future
- Able to further identify and explore new areas of work

For Government:

- ideal collaboration/networking experience between the academic and government veterinary communities
- Opportunity to evaluate how government department is meeting its aims and objectives for supporting student access to wider experience
- Opportunity to create a knowledge sharing environment
- Improving leadership, people management and development skills
- Increases awareness across the profession of the nature of government veterinary roles and responsibilities

Interns in 2007

Amy Delgado from the University of Texas and Luisa Aneiros Gene, a final year student at the College of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Sciences of the University of Sao Paulo (FMVZ-USP) and Hazel Foley from the Royal Veterinary College joined Defra for an internship programme in 2007. They were able to visit a range of locations including Animal Health Offices across the UK, West Lakeland Veterinary Group, Veterinary Laboratory Agency, Food Standards Agency, Meat Hygiene Service Border Inspection Post (BIP) at Heathrow, Slaughter Houses etc.

Amy, Luisa and Hazel's Top Three Things Not To Miss Out On!

- 1. Visit people who are involved in your favourite subjects - finding about current situations and understanding fully the history of events on a subject that interests you most.*
- 2. Visit people who are involved in subjects completely foreign to you - this is the time when learning something new can be done with people who are on the 'cutting edge' of issues that will affect your profession.*
- 3. Get an overview - allowing an all important familiarisation with the department, not getting focused or bogged down with information.*

For further information/enquiries please e-mail at www.gvs.gov.uk