

Clinical Extramural
Studies in UCD
School of
Veterinary
Medicine

Student and Placement
Provider Guideline

January 2014

CEMS at UCD School of Veterinary Medicine

Background to CEMS

The Clinical Extramural Studies (CEMS) module in the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine is designed to provide students with real-life veterinary practice experience that will both enhance and compliment the didactic teaching programme received as part of their university studies. The module has its own specific code and is currently awarded 40 credits out of the 100 allocated to Final Year in recognition of the time period of professional practice required.

In addition to traditional “practice-style” experience, the CEMS programme is also designed to encourage students to participate in other avenues of veterinary endeavour, including those of potential future career interest to the student (e.g. research projects, laboratory/regulatory work etc.). CEMS is designed to provide students with “hands-on” experience at field level to improve their knowledge in areas such as animal handling, diagnosis, treatment, disease prevention and herd health. In addition, it provides the student with a unique insight into areas of client communication/conflict resolution and practice management, as well as issues pertaining to their future legal and ethical responsibilities. Taken together with the Day 1 competencies taught at university level, CEMS can therefore provide the new graduate with the requisite skills to allow the successful commencement of their career. CEMS also serves the aim of making the student understand the concept of life-long learning and the need for future, on-going CPD. UCD has been extremely fortunate over the years in the level of participation and goodwill afforded to students by CEMS providers; without such cooperation, the teaching programme would suffer significantly and this collaboration with our colleagues is hugely appreciated.

Specific aims of CEMS module

The specific aims of CEMS are to help the student better:

- develop their animal handling skills for all common domestic species,
- enhance their understanding and appreciation of diagnostic and medical/surgical treatments commonly employed in a variety of veterinary working environments,
- appreciate the role of preventive medicine in all common domestic species,
- appreciate the role of herd health and epidemiology in production animal work,
- understand the practice and economics of production animal work,
- develop their understanding of practice economics and practice management,
- develop communication skills for all aspects of veterinary work,
- expand their experience and knowledge of those disciplines, techniques or species that may not be fully covered within UCD,
- appreciate the importance of animal welfare and the necessity to relieve pain/distress,
- understand the ethical and legal responsibilities of veterinarians in relation to clients, animals and the wider community.

From the outset, students are made aware of their legal and ethical obligations whilst on CEMS, and are required to consult the following publications/resources

- UCD policy on work placements
- Veterinary Practice Act 2005 and Veterinary Practice (Amendment) Act 2012 – professional responsibilities for both students and participating CEMS providers

Timelines for CEMS

CEMS commences from Easter time of the Third Year of the undergraduate MVB course (Year 2 of the Graduate Entry course). An overview of subjects taught in the Third, Fourth and Final years of the Veterinary Medicine programme, which form the bed-rock of a student's knowledge base for CEMS, is provided below:

Third & Fourth Year

- Pathobiological sciences
- Medicine
- Surgery
- Therapeutics
- Herd Health
- Epidemiology
- Veterinary Public Health

All body systems and specialities are covered under the above headings of medicine, surgery and therapeutics (e.g. cardio-respiratory system, gastrointestinal system, endocrinology etc.). A detailed breakdown of the content of each module is beyond the scope of this document; nevertheless, such information including course content and structure can be downloaded from the School website at www.ucd.ie/vetmed (click under "Undergraduate Programmes").

Fifth Year

- Clinical rotations in the UCD Veterinary Hospital (all relevant disciplines including small and large animal medicine, small and large animal surgery, diagnostic imaging, anaesthesia, clinical pathology, shelter medicine etc.)
- Electives Studies
- Clinical EMS

Breakdown of CEMS requirements

At present, students are required to complete 24 weeks of CEMS before graduation. Within this 24 weeks period, there are mandatory periods that must be spent within various sub-disciplines as follows:

- Small animal practice – 4 weeks
- Large animal/mixed practice – 4 weeks
- Equine practice – 2 weeks (it is recommended that this 2 week period be undertaken as one placement)
- Meat plant experience – 6 days

The remaining 13 weeks of CEMS may be spent at the student's discretion, although all placements have to be approved in advance by the CEMS Coordinator. One week is allowed for appropriate conference attendance (e.g. VICAS, BSAVA, North American Conference etc.). Whilst there is currently no specific requirement as to the duration of each placement, it is recommended that, whenever possible, a minimum period of two weeks should be allotted to each placement to enhance the benefit to the student. Cumulative placements are not encouraged (e.g. five Saturdays counting as one week) due to the lack of continuity in case progression/management; however, bearing in mind the special circumstances of individual students and placement providers, a maximum period of 2 weeks of CEMS can be obtained through cumulative placements.

- **Base practices and durations of stay**

Students are free to adopt a base practice if they so wish i.e. a practice they return to on repeated occasions to refine their skills on an on-going basis; however, this is not a mandatory requirement. If a base practice is nominated, it ideally should be chosen prior to entering 4th Year of the course (i.e. not necessarily the first practice the student visits in 3rd Year) so that the student may experience various placements before determining the most suitable choice for both parties.

Irrespective of whether or not a base practice is nominated; no student should spend more than 10 weeks combined placements in any one practice.

- **Research projects and non-veterinary projects**

Currently, students are allowed to allocate a period of up to 6 weeks for an approved research project towards their CEMS requirement. This has proved increasingly popular over the years and provides those students with a potential interest in a future research career to gain initial experience of such an environment; in addition to bench research and epidemiological studies, students have obtained an insight into grant writing and study planning, with many having their names included on subsequent scientific publications. In exceptional cases, and with the prior approval of the CEMS Coordinator, this period may be increased to a maximum of 8 weeks.

Whilst the School is very keen to maintain a holistic overview on what is beneficial for a student's future career, the modular title of Clinical EMS mandates that only placements involving direct work under veterinary supervision should be counted for the purposes of this module (research projects involving other scientists as above being an obvious exception).

Placement procedure and selection of practices

A central database of all participating practices within the Republic of Ireland (ROI) is available for students to study under the CEMS Module on Blackboard. Students wishing to obtain a placement with a specific practice/organization are expected to make initial contact by letter, email or telephone. Upon agreement to provide the placement, the student then fills out CEMS **Form 1** (also available on Blackboard); Form 1 addresses the practice identified and an outline plan of the placement objectives which have been agreed with the placement provider. Form 1 is then submitted online to the CEMS Coordinator by the student for approval; the Coordinator will in turn notify the student of any potential problem with the placement within 7 days of receipt.

All students are expected to present themselves and behave in a totally professional manner; students are responsible for providing their own personal protective equipment (PPE), stethoscopes, thermometers etc. On initial contact with the practice, the student should also ascertain any special requirements that may apply such as starting/finishing times, weekend duties or additional PPE required.

Form 2 (Verification Form) is filled out by the veterinarian and returned to the School Office for recording, audit and archive purposes. Form 2 is available online (www.ucd.ie/vetmed) under the banner heading of "CEMS Information for Placement Providers". This form is returned electronically to the Module Support Service (ems@ucd.ie). Veterinarians are kindly requested to return Form 2 as soon as possible following completion of the placement, and within 60 days at the latest.

Please note that a "Framework of Learning Objectives" document that recommends the skill sets/experiences to be obtained during CEMS placements is available on Blackboard (students) and under the "CEMS Information for Placement Providers" banner.

UCD provides full third-party and indemnity insurance cover to participating practices/institutions for students on approved CEMS placements; the students are, however, responsible for their own private health and accident/emergency insurance cover.

Please note that any student having difficulties securing a suitable placement can seek advice/help from the CEMS Coordinator or other staff members, as appropriate.

Could placement databases contain additional information?

UCD School of Veterinary Medicine is currently in negotiation with placement providers to seek their thoughts and approval for a system whereby the Practice Database may contain additional information specifying the nature of work undertaken, and a reflection of the students learning experience at that site. The primary purpose is to help both students and providers to identify “best fits” that will enhance the overall learning experience for both parties. Future students can then review such postings and use the knowledge gained to select the CEMS providers best suited to their needs.

Where can CEMS placements be conducted?

Based on the international composition of our student body, it is recognized that placements may be undertaken in any geographical location, and do not necessarily have to be performed with the ROI; although not mandatory, however, it is strongly recommended that all students should consider undertaking at least some portion of their placements within the ROI.

Assessment of CEMS and Feedback

- **Assessment**

At present, the method for evaluating student performance during placements is by means of the CEMS Verification Form 2 (referred to above) that is returned to the School Office by the placement provider. The outcome is determined as satisfactory or non-satisfactory, and the overall module is classed as “Pass/Fail” based on the summation of such feedback. Any issues arising or complaints received are followed up immediately by the CEMS Coordinator.

However, placement providers are offered the opportunity to assess and provide feedback on specific aspects of a student’s performance, including time-keeping, professional appearance and general behaviour/enthusiasm etc.

Please note that an annual focus group meeting of student representatives, UCD staff and placement provider representatives is planned to review the performance of this module, and to discuss/address any issues that may arise.

Electronic resources available

The electronic resources available on the web for both students and placement providers will be continually updated as new information is made available; thus, participants are requested to continually check these resources to follow updates in areas such as modification of the Practice Database, feedback from focus group meetings etc.

The information currently uploaded on the CEMS Module on Blackboard for student use is as follows:

- Practice Database,
- Student and Placement Provider Guideline document,
- Framework of Learning Outcomes document,

- Veterinary Council of Ireland “Code of Professional Conduct”,
- Form 1 (Placement Application form),
- CEMS Information Lecture PowerPoint.

The information currently uploaded on the “CEMS Information for Placement Providers” banner of the School webpage is as follows:

- Introductory letter to the CEMS Module from the Dean,
- Student and Placement Provider Guideline document (with additional background on course content/structure available at www.ucd.ie/vetmed),
- Framework of Learning Outcomes document,
- Form 2 (Placement Verification form),
- CEMS Information Lecture PowerPoint.