



VCA ASEC STUDENT/EXTERN ORIENTATION

Dear Colleague:

Welcome to VCA Animal Specialty and Emergency Center! We look forward to working with you during your externship/preceptorship.

Our objectives are to teach and educate students, while maintaining referral-caliber patient care and referral-caliber communication and service for clients and referring veterinarians. During the 20+ years that we have conducted an externship program, we have developed the following policies to balance these objectives. Please review the attached information and let us know if you have any questions.

To avoid crowding on the floor:

- When not actively working on a case, at the discretion of the department you are working with, you are to remain in the room designated for externs.
- Schedules may adjust based on senior doctor's schedules, and to avoid overlap of other students.

1. **ORIENTATION IS IN WRITING:**

- To ensure that all externs receive complete, detailed information, our orientation is IN WRITING rather than a verbal discussion.
- If you have any questions whatsoever regarding orientation, it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to ask your supervising DVM, at the time that you are first introduced to her/him on the first day of the externship.

2. **WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT ASEC:**

- Check in at the front desk and introduce yourself as an extern student.
- Please wear your school's name badge at all times while at ASEC. After checking in, you will be directed where to go.
- Externs spending time with our cardiology, internal medicine, radiology, or surgery services begin their day by attending hospital-wide morning rounds. Morning rounds start at 7am seven days/week in our downstairs conference room. Please allow time to get settled in the conference room before 7am – late arrivals can be distracting. Please choose a seat on the periphery of the room to allow the doctors to sit at the tables.
- Externs spending time with our emergency/critical care service begin their day by checking in with the senior ECC clinicians in the ICU office at 12pm.

3. **NAME TAG:**

In order to maintain a safe environment, we will not be providing you with an ASEC name badge. We require that you wear your school name badge at all times.

4. **SUPERVISING DVM (mentor):**

For each department, there is a supervising DVM who will be your primary contact person for any questions and will also be responsible for completing your evaluation. The Supervising DVMs for each ASEC department are:

EMERGENCY/CRITICAL CARE DEPT: Dr. Nicole Spurlock

ASEC's ECC service is staffed 24/7 by ICU senior clinicians and rotating interns. The ECC doctors work day, swing, and overnight shifts, and their scheduled days may vary from week to week.

All students work with multiple doctors during their time spent with the ECC service. The most-senior DVM in the hospital on any particular day is the designated "supervising DVM" for that day. However, students should not limit themselves to shadowing only the supervising DVM. Externs are expected to "follow the action" during their shift in order to maximize their learning opportunities. Our interns receive the bulk of incoming cases, so externs will commonly "shadow" the interns. Externs should remain present as the interns discuss their cases with the senior ICU clinicians and ask questions as they arise. If multiple cases are being seen or procedures are being performed simultaneously, externs can choose which DVM/procedure to shadow.

Etiquette – Externs are encouraged to follow the ECC doctors into our exam rooms during most discussions with clients. Please allow the attending DVM to perform all communication with clients – save questions for after you have exited the exam room.

Also, in certain delicate situations, DVMs may ask that you refrain from shadowing them into the exam rooms situations – please respect their request. All ECC DVMs provide input for completion of extern evaluations.

SURGERY DEPT: Dr. Eric Chow

Our surgeons work 4 days each week, Sunday-Wednesday and Wednesday-Saturday.

Therefore, you will have a different "supervising DVM" on different days. For days that Dr. Chow is not in the hospital, you will be re-assigned to another surgeon for the day.

However, rather than spending 100% of your time with a single designated mentor each day, we feel your education will be maximized by spending time with each of the senior surgeons, rather than just one. Externs are expected and required to get involved with cases with all DVMs of the department. Ideally, each extern should scrub in on at least one case per day, either as assistant, or as 2nd assistant. Depending on case complexity and time constraints, the extern may only be allowed to observe. Ask the surgeons which procedure(s) would be best for you to scrub in on. We are a busy, fast paced referral center that requires the extern to have initiative to gain the most from their experience here.

INTERNAL MEDICINE: Dr. Betty Chow

Internal Medicine and Cardiology externs will accompany the Supervising DVM during their daily work, as well as work with the specialty interns, rotating interns, and department staff. Externs may be asked to communicate with clients, perform exams, assist with procedures, and perform record keeping.

CARDIOLOGY: Dr. Kristin Barncord

Cardiology externs will accompany the Supervising DVM during their daily work, as well as work with the specialty interns, rotating interns, and department staff. Externs may be asked to communicate with clients, perform exams, assist with procedures, and perform record keeping.

RADIOLOGY: Dr. Jean Reichle

Radiology externs will accompany the Supervising DVM during their daily work, as well as work with their specialty intern and department staff. Externs are also asked to review the radiology teaching file over the course of their externship.

5. DAILY and WEEKLY, FEEDBACK:

It is your responsibility to ask the doctor you have been working with during the day for feedback each day, but particularly at the end of each week. Doctors will provide comments and feedback during the day, but it is specifically the extern's RESPONSIBILITY to request feedback at the end of every day instead of expecting your supervising DVM to seek you out to provide this.

6. ATTIRE:

The following are REQUIRED at all times:

- Scrubs
- Closed-toed shoes
- Name tag
- Stethoscope
- X-ray badge (mandatory only for Western University students)

7. **PARKING POLICY:**

To ensure that our clients have available parking in our small lot, unfortunately we must require that **externs not park in the parking lot at any time, including nights, weekends, or during rounds.**

Nearby street parking is available on:

- the adjacent 2 blocks of Ohio Ave., east of Sepulveda Blvd. (all day)
- Massachusetts Ave. (all day)
- Pontius Ave. (2 hours)
- All streets parallel to Sepulveda, to the east. (some 2 hours, some all day)

*Please pay close attention to all parking signs, as parking enforcement in the area is strict and penalties can be steep.

8. **ASEC CODE OF CONDUCT:**

Externs are expected to abide by the same code of conduct (see copy attached below) that our doctors and staff adhere to. There are no exceptions.

9. **SCHEDULE:**

The schedule for externs varies by department. Attached are extern schedules for each ASEC department (surgery, emergency/critical care, radiology, cardiology, and internal medicine). However, these schedules are subject to change.

10. **ROUNDS AND LECTURES:**

Your attendance is expected at any rounds/lectures that occur during your scheduled working hours (case rounds, radiology review, journal club, and any other lectures/presentations by senior clinicians or interns). Please be on time. ASEC's schedule of rounds is:

- Daily Hospital-wide Morning Rounds - begin promptly at 7am downstairs in the conference room
- Evening Intern Lecture Series – most Wednesdays at 6pm downstairs in the conference room.
- Please ask your supervising DVM if there are additional department-specific rounds you should attend and if any advanced preparation is recommended/expected.

11. **INTRODUCTION TO ASEC DVMS AND STAFF:**

- We would like to be able to personally introduce you to every member of the ASEC team. However, VCA ASEC is a multi-specialist, 24-hour hospital, with all of the doctors and staff of the various departments working various schedules and different shifts. So it is just not possible to give each extern a personal introduction to all doctors and staff.
- It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to take the initiative by introducing yourself to the doctors and staff whom you meet each day (not just in the department you are rotating with, but also the doctors and staff of any other departments that you interact with)

- Please do not feel that the other DVMs are unapproachable or unaware of your presence here – they all work a 10 to 14 hour shift, and when busy, may not stop to chat – but they welcome your interest and are happy to teach – and we all want to learn from the externs as well.

*FEEL FREE TO ASK QUESTIONS OF ANY DVM FROM ANY DEPARTMENT!

12. **ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES:**

Your responsibilities while at ASEC are:

- To learn.
- To show initiative and get involved: don't wait to be asked!
- To ask questions.

Education is your reason for being here. We will not task you with busywork. As discussed below, given the referral-only nature of our caseload, externs do not have primary responsibility for patient care, treatments, communication with clients & referring veterinarians, or recordkeeping.

So, what specifically are externs expected to do? The following items are your specific responsibilities:

A. **ACCOMPANY A DVM:**

- Externs are expected to "shadow" either their supervising DVM, or any one of the other doctors on their assigned service. Again, the extern is expected to take the initiative to "go where the action is" rather than waiting to be directed or invited to follow.

B. **GET INVOLVED:**

- You are expected to observe (and/or assist, at the doctor's discretion) each patient's examination, diagnostic procedures, treatment, surgery, etc. It is the responsibility of the extern to become involved: don't wait to be asked. Instead, make the effort to get involved. We cannot emphasize this often enough: Don't wait to be asked, get involved!
- You are welcome to observe, and ask to participate, in whatever is going on in the hospital. All externs, from all departments, are WELCOME to put on a cap, mask & shoe covers, and observe & ask questions during surgical procedures. (Only in a rare few exceptions, i.e. total hip replacement, do we minimize the number of observers). DO NOT WAIT FOR AN INVITATION – it is your responsibility to ask to be involved, for any case you are interested in.

C. **TECHNICAL & PRACTICAL "HANDS-ON" SKILLS:**

Our goal is to give externs as much "hands-on" experience as possible, while maintaining certain constraints & protocols:

- a) Placement of all IV catheters, as well as performance of all patient treatments, are performed by our experienced technical staff
- b) Other than that, extern performance of technical procedures is at the clinician's discretion. We will endeavor to keep you as involved as possible in as many procedures as possible (i.e. for surgery externs, obviously the externs will not have primary responsibility for performing a procedure, but we will have the externs scrub in whenever possible to assist). For diagnostic and therapeutic procedures, this will depend on the nature of the procedure, and the attending clinician's discretion. ASK!
- c) In our practice, when the client arrives, typically the patient is brought into the back treatment area for the initial examination, while the client is completing their paperwork. Externs (and interns) are expected to participate in and/or

observe the physical examinations. At this time, the clinician, externs, and interns, examine the patient together and discuss their findings.

- d) In the ICU – feel free to ask the staff “Is there anything you would like me to assist with?” and for various evaluations (i.e. repeat auscultations, serial neurologic exams, hydration checks, etc.). Ask the DVM if they would like you to do the evaluation before they do.

*Also – during a CPR, you may volunteer to keep records (of time, drugs given, etc.) as the CPR is happening.

D. OBSERVE during client communication:

- As discussed below, externs do not have primary responsibility for client & referring veterinarian communication at ASEC. You ARE expected to accompany the DVM into the exam room to listen in. Ask the DVM any questions you have regarding what was communicated after leaving the exam room.

E. ASK QUESTIONS to maximize the TEACHING & EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

- You MAY, AND MUST, Always Ask Questions: during your work shift, during rounds, and at any other time. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ASK! If you do not, the attending DVM may presume that you already know the information, or do not wish to know.
- Feel free, at any time, to ask the DVM to discuss the case, their plans, diagnostic findings, client communication, etc. If things are busy, the DVM may ask you to “Save that question for later”. It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to then bring it up later.

Western University students: the university has given us specific instructions that:

- Before giving an answer, the DVM must ask you what you already know.
- If the DVM feels that you have already researched the question, they may answer.
- otherwise, they will either:
 - a) Tell you to research the topic (either by reviewing textbooks, or online) and come back to the DVM with the results of your research.
 - b) OR they may verbally quiz you before giving an answer.

Although externs are assigned to one department, PLEASE feel free to ask questions of any DVM or staff member, of any department, at any time. But again, they will not seek you out – YOU MUST ASK!

Surgery externs: please note that, while we are always happy to answer questions at any time, the best time to ask questions is often while we are scrubbing in, draping the incision, or during the closure (since after the procedure is finished, the surgeon is often busy writing reports, making phone calls, etc. and it is then more difficult to spare the time to answer questions at length. If things are busy, the surgeon may ask you to “save that question for rounds” or “research that, and tell me your conclusion at rounds.” It is then YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to bring it up at rounds, rather than expecting the surgeon to do so (since, on a busy day, they may not remember to do so).

F. ROLE IN MANAGING PATIENTS:

As described below, externs do not have primary responsibility for patient care. HOWEVER: For any cases that you & your assigned/supervising DVM are involved with, the extern is expected to:

- a) Review the diagnostic plan, and treatment plan/treatment orders
- b) ASK QUESTIONS if there is anything unclear to you
- c) MAKE SUGGESTIONS! In addition to teaching externs, we want to learn from them so, if you have any suggestions, input, things you have seen done differently at other hospitals – it is your responsibility to speak up! Don’t wait for the attending doctor to ask you; if you don’t speak up, they will assume you have no input to offer.

G. REVIEW CHARTS:

- Of the patients whose care you have been involved in; it is then YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to ask your assigned DVM/supervising DVM any questions you may have regarding the case, the communication, etc. Do not wait for the DVM to quiz you – if you do not ask questions, the DVM will assume you already know the information, or don't wish to know.
- We will be happy to show you how to review a chart on our computerized medical record system (the VIA software system).

H. ATTEND ROUNDS:

- You are expected to attend whichever departmental rounds occur during your “on-clinics” shift. This is also the time where YOU have the responsibility to ask any questions, regarding any cases you have been involved with during the day.
- During rounds, it is vital that all clinicians be able to clearly hear the discussion. If there are a large number of people in attendance, externs are asked to allow the clinicians to sit at the main table. If you are unable to hear the discussion well, it is your responsibility to let the speaker know you are having trouble hearing him or her.
- You are also welcome to attend our Wednesday evening intern lecture series (most Wednesdays at 6pm in the downstairs conference room), even if you are not scheduled to be at ASEC at those hours. Dinner is typically provided!

ASK FOR AN ASSIGNMENT IF THINGS ARE SLOW:

- Caseload is variable and unpredictable! There may be times when you are ‘on-clinics’ but no new cases are received.
- Your supervising DVM for the day may ask you to do any of the following:
 - review a case, perform a physical exam/orthopedic exam/neurologic exam, SOAP a patient, assess specific critical care parameters or body systems for a patient, prepare a brief presentation on a disease condition, observe a surgical, radiographic, or other diagnostic procedure, review how to calculate constant rate infusions, etc, etc.
 - The DVM may ask you to perform one of these tasks while they observe, or may ask you to do so and then come back to them with your conclusions.
 - If you have “time on your hands”, ASK your supervising DVM to assign you a task – do not wait for the senior clinician to seek you out.

13. What are the externs NOT responsible for?

- a) Primary responsibility for patient care: Externs do not have primary responsibility for patient care at ASEC. The referral-only nature of our caseload requires that primary case responsibility be maintained by the clinicians. Externs are, of course, expected to accompany the clinician, observe, and assist at the clinician's discretion.
- b) Performing treatments & placing catheters: Placement of all IV catheters and all patient treatments are performed by our experienced technical staff (to minimize vascular trauma and ensure reliable venous access).
- c) Communication with referring veterinarians and clients: For a wide variety of reasons over the years, we have established a policy that externs do not handle client (or referring veterinarian) communication at ASEC – all such communication is conducted by the attending DVM only. In the 20+ years that we have administered an externship program, experience has taught us that having externs taking patient history or giving client updates are skills best learned in a general-practice setting. The nature and complexity of cases in a referral hospital such as ASEC necessitate that all communication be handled by an experienced clinician:
 - To ensure accurate, detailed and time-efficient communication.
 - To eliminate client unease, and reassure them that their pet is being cared for by an experienced doctor.
- d) Externs are ALWAYS welcome to accompany the DVM to the exam room to listen in on history-taking, exam, client education, etc. and we are ALWAYS happy to answer questions you may have, regarding communication, as part of your education here. Do not wait to be asked to come along – it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to do so without being specifically asked by the attending DVM.

14. **EVALUATION FORMS:**

- **FOR WESTERN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS:**
 - It is YOUR responsibility to confirm with your mentor that they received your evaluation via E-value.
 - Evaluations for ECC externs are completed by Dr. Spurlock, based on the input of all of the ECC clinicians who have worked with the extern

- **FOR EXTERNS FROM OTHER UNIVERSITIES:**
 - If your school requires a written evaluation, it is YOUR responsibility to ensure your mentor receives this form AND to confirm with them that it has been submitted. Even if the university has told you that the evaluation form was emailed to ASEC, it remains YOUR responsibility to confirm with your mentor that they have received it. If they have not, YOU must contact the university, get the form, and give it to your mentor.

15. **PHOTOCOPYING:**

- Unfortunately, we are not able to allow externs to use the copiers.

16. **STUDY AREA / PERSONAL BELONGINGS**

- Because we have limited space in the hospital office areas, we ask that externs keep all personal belongings in the designated office space, which is located in the building adjacent to the main hospital building. This unit is passcode secured – the passcode will be provided to you upon your arrival.
 - Externs can also use this space as a quiet study area if there is down time during their day.
 - For radiology externs, the radiology teaching files you are required to review is located in the designated office space.

17. **FOOD/DRINKS**

- Externs are expected to clean up after themselves.
- Per OSHA requirements, food and drinks are not allowed in any of the patient treatment areas.

18. **INTERNET ACCESS**

- ASEC has public WiFi that can be used by visiting students. See posted signs for connection information. Under NO circumstances is it acceptable to plug any network or patch cable (supplied by the student or attached to an ASEC computer or network jack) into any network port at ASEC – this type of unauthorized access jeopardizes our entire hospital computer system, and may result in termination of your externship here.

19. **SUGGESTIONS:**

- We are always open to your suggestions, to maximize your education and to improve the quality of our program for future externs.

ASEC EXTERN SCHEDULE

Please contact your department-specific preceptor 2-3 weeks prior to the scheduled start of your rotation to confirm your attendance and exact schedule.

Surgery Extern: Eric.Chow@vca.com

- Monday – Friday from 7am until evening rounds are completed (typically between 5:30-6:30pm). Please confirm with your supervising DVM that you are released for the day.

Radiology Extern: Jean.Reichle@vca.com

- Monday – Friday from 7am-5pm. Please confirm with your supervising DVM that you are released for the day.

Cardiology Extern: Kristin.Barncord@vca.com

- Tuesday – Friday from 7am until cases completed (typically between 5-6pm). Please confirm with your supervising DVM that you are released for the day.

Internal Medicine Extern: Betty.Chow@vca.com

- Monday – Friday from 7am until cases completed (typically between 5-6pm). Please confirm with your supervising DVM that you are released for the day. Your preceptor may have you scheduled Sunday-Thursday in some instances.

Emergency/Critical Care Extern: Nicole.Spurlock@vca.com

- Monday – Friday from 12pm-8pm. Please confirm with your supervising DVM that you are released for the day.

THIRD YEAR WESTERN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS:

- Monday – Friday from 12pm-8pm
- Please note that it is MANDATORY, per Western University instructions that:
 - 50% of your time must be “on clinics” and 50% of your time MUST be spent in study group (i.e. off clinics).
 - HOWEVER, this does NOT have to be 5 continuous hours – externs can break this up into smaller blocks of time in order to be involved in interesting emergency cases as they arrive.
 - The extern (NOT the supervising DVM) is responsible for ensuring that the externs spend the appropriate number of hours “on” and “off” clinics.
 - During the day, the designated study group area is in Unit G. In the evening, externs are welcome to study in the surgeons’ office.

ASEC’S DOCTOR & STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Speak no ill of any referring veterinarian.

- Never! No matter what the situation is, there is NO excuse. A sarcastic or critical comment can be overheard by a client, staff person, etc. and make its way back to the RDVM.
2. Speak no ill of any client.
 - As above: the remark could be overheard, or repeated by someone inadvertently in the client's presence. An objective description ("difficult", "demanding" etc.) is acceptable, but there is NO acceptable excuse for derogatory terms of any sort.
 3. Staff: criticize privately, praise publicly.
 - NEVER critique a staff person in the presence of other staff: take the person aside for a one-on-one discussion.
 4. No backbiting.
 - Never critique, to other staff, any staff person who is not present to defend themselves. Do not permit your staff to do so either. Bring your concerns confidentially to the doctor or supervisor.
 5. No venting.
 - There is no acceptable excuse for a doctor or supervisor, as the person in authority, to belittle, speak sarcastically to, or vent your anger or frustration at, your staff.
 6. No griping.
 - It sets a bad tone. It depresses everyone's morale. If there is a problem, then consider how to solve it, and bring your suggestion to the appropriate DVM or supervisor.
 7. Take no safety risks.
 - Never allow an owner to restrain a pet, or pressure you into doing anything else which compromises safety and creates a risk of injury to the client, staff, yourself, or the pet.
 8. Give your staff clear, specific answers.
 - In particular, when the staff person is relaying a question from a client, the doctor's (or supervisor's) answer should be clear, brief and specific. If the client persists with questions, see #5 above & #10 below.
 9. Every patient is your responsibility.
 - Doctors are equally responsible for all ECC and Surgery cases in the hospital. Do not give less attention to a case merely because it was admitted by a different doctor, the previous shift.
 10. Get on the phone.
 - Staff AND DOCTORS must be willing to get on the phone with a client, whenever necessary, as often as necessary. Answering their questions is not an imposition: it is an indispensable part of our job.
 11. Be on time.
 - Tardiness creates an unfair burden to your coworkers. Likewise, it is unfair to our clients to keep them waiting. No excuse is good enough: be on time.
 12. Never gratuitously increase another's workload.
 - In particular, needlessly making or leaving a mess for someone else to clean up is an unfair waste of that person's time and effort.