



**Southern Cross  
University**

Veterinary Sciences

## Fitness to Practise Guidelines

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Veterinary Medicine (Honours) and Veterinary Technology Students

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## Definitions:

***Fitness to practice*** (FtP) is the expectation that the SCU Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine (BVetMed) and Bachelor of Veterinary Technology (BVetTech) students will have the skills, knowledge, character and health requirements to meet the physical, psychosocial, professional and regulatory standards of competency required to safely, responsibly and effectively perform in veterinary practice. These standards of proficiency are required to enable a safe, ethical and compassionate working environment and safeguard public confidence in the professions.

***Fitness to practise guidelines*** provides guidance for students in relation to responsibilities and conduct, which must be demonstrated in their professional and private lives when they apply to enter the veterinary profession.

***WIL*** Work Integrated Learning

## 1. Policy Overview

This policy outlines the standards and expectations for BVetMed and BVetTech students in both university settings and WIL placements to ensure they are fit to practise. It emphasises the importance of adhering to professional, ethical, and regulatory standards essential for veterinary practice. Compliance with these requirements is necessary for maintaining a safe, productive, and professional learning environment that safeguards the welfare of students, faculty, animals, and the public.

Additionally, the policy can provide some clarity to guide students who may be struggling with inherent requirements or other issues and serve as a framework for the management of risks and issues related to students enrolled in the aforementioned degrees either during WIL, clinical training or academic education including: vaccinations and health requirements, site-specific requirements (including inductions and online learning modules), forms and documents and checks and certificates. See *Appendix 1 Inherent requirements vs Fitness to Practise*.

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) provides a thorough explanation of expectations and guidelines with examples for students in Part 2 of [RCVS Fitness to Practise- Veterinary Students](#) and the [RCVS Fitness to Practise – Veterinary Nursing Students](#).

WIL providers also have obligations and requirements that must be fulfilled before becoming an approved practice for SCU students. SCU [WIL Procedures](#) have been developed to provide clear information on the establishment and monitoring of WIL partners, support provided to the student and providers and the quality assurance of the WIL activities. The university will also provide guidance to the WIL partners on their duty to ensure students comply with fitness to practise requirements, to protect present or future patients, clients, service users and members of the public and to safeguard public confidence in the profession; and comply with the requirements of professional/regulatory bodies. The partner induction procedures will also include instructions for management of academic or

non-academic non-compliance, unsatisfactory performance or other issues contrary to the fitness to practise requirements.

When evaluating a student's fitness to practise, the review may take into account the following factors:

- **Physical or mental health conditions** that may:
  - Substantially limit the student's capacity to meet the occupational requirements of the profession for which the course prepares them.
  - Pose a risk to the health and safety of others in the workplace; or
  - Endanger public health.
- **Interpersonal skills** that are essential for professional practice and collaborative environments.
- **Criminal behaviour** that may impact the student's suitability for the profession or placement settings.
- **Conduct that violates professional ethical standards** relevant to the profession.
- **Actions contrary to policies** of the University, placement agencies, or both.
- **Capacity to fulfill the required components of placements or professional activities**, including the ability to complete tasks safely and competently.
- **Behaviours, including verbal or non-verbal actions**, that indicate a potential risk of harm or disruption to university staff, other students, placement agencies, those associated with placement agencies, or harm to professional reputation.

It is critical that any consideration of these factors avoids unlawful discrimination and adheres to relevant legal and ethical standards.

## 2. Scope

***Fitness to practise*** applies to all students in the degrees of Bachelor of Veterinary Technology and Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine at SCU, whilst engaged in academic and WIL activities, including those participating in any work placements, clinical settings, research facilities, or professional interactions as part of their BVetMed or BVetTech studies. Students [agree to meet their obligations and responsibilities on placement covered in part 9-15 below when they sign the WIL statement](#) in *Sonia* each year.

Unsatisfactory Student Progress during WIL that is not considered to have escalated to a fitness to practise issue, is dealt with under the SCU Work [Integrated Learning Procedures Section 5](#).

## 3. Policy Oversight

The Veterinary Sciences Discipline Chair is responsible for the overall governance of the FTP policy. The Fitness to Practice Committee (FTPC) oversees implementation, reviews cases, and ensures fair and consistent application of the policy. The Director of Accreditation monitors compliance and provides regular reports to the FTPC.

#### 4. Fitness to Practise Committee

The FTPC, convened when required, will comprise:

- Chair: An experienced faculty member with expertise in veterinary practice and ethics.
- Faculty representatives: At least two academic staff members with a background in clinical teaching or veterinary ethics.
- External member: A registered veterinarian from outside the university.
- Student representative: A senior student not involved in the specific case being reviewed.
- Legal or procedural advisor: To ensure compliance with university and regulatory frameworks (non-voting)

##### 4.1 Panel Member conflict of interest

- Student Consultation: The student will be asked if they believe any panel members or practitioners have a conflict of interest.
- Conflict of Interest in Panel Convener: If the Panel Convener has a conflict of interest, another staff member from a relevant program will assume the role after consultation with the student.
- Conflict of Interest for Staff or Practitioners: Staff or practitioners asked to join the Review must disclose any conflicts of interest and withdraw if necessary.
- Impartial Observer: At the Academic Student Advisor's discretion, an impartial observer, agreeable to all parties, may oversee the Panel's fairness. The observer will provide a procedural fairness report but will not influence the Panel's recommendations.

##### 4.2 The responsibilities of the Fitness to Practise Committee include:

- Develop, review, and update the FTP policy regularly.
- Oversee training for staff and students regarding professional behaviour, ethics, and competencies.
- Review individual cases of potential FTP concerns and make recommendations.
- Ensure decisions are based on evidence, fairness, and adherence to professional and legal standards.
- Maintain confidentiality and ensure records are securely stored.

#### 5. Governance Procedures

*See also appendix 2 – flowchart for review and investigation.*

##### 5.1 Reporting Concerns

Concerns about a student's fitness to practise may be raised by faculty, staff, placement supervisors, or peers. A person can make an allegation of non-academic misconduct based on reasonable suspicion. Concerns must be documented and submitted in writing to the Academic Student Advisor.

##### 5.2 Responding to reports

- If the concerns raised in the request cannot be resolved satisfactorily through informal processes, the Academic Student Advisor shall consider the request for review and determine

whether a review will be instituted. If the concern is minor, the Academic Student Advisor may address it informally with the student.

- Where the Academic Student Advisor determines that a review will be instituted, they will nominate, in writing, a relevant staff member to convene, and institute, a Review Panel to undertake the process outlined in 5.3 – 5.6. The nominated staff member will hereafter be referred to as the Review Panel Convener.
- If the Academic Student Advisor initiates a review process under this policy (as listed above) they may request in writing to the Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic Quality), that the student's enrolment be suspended or that conditions or restrictions be imposed. These measures may include suspending or limiting the student's participation in professional placements or restricting access to university facilities. Such actions are taken if deemed necessary to fulfill the University's duty of care to its students, staff, or placement agencies and/or reputational standing while the review is ongoing.
- If a written request for suspension from the Academic Student Advisor is submitted, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic Quality) may suspend the student and/or place restrictions or conditions on the student or the student's enrolment, if he/she considers that such action is prudent or necessary having regard to the University's duty of care to its students, staff and/or placement agencies, pending the completion of the review process under this policy.
- In this instance, the Academic Student Adviser will notify the student in writing of the decision to proceed with an investigation and direct the student to the review convenor.

### 5.3 Formal Investigation

- The review convenor will invite a written response from the student within ten (10) working days, providing all details of the concern and complete the following duties:
  - Review Panel: A Review Panel will be convened within twenty (20) working days from the Academic Student Advisor's decision to investigate, consisting of the membership as described in clause 4.
  - Advise the student of the proposed panel membership and asked for any potential conflict of interest. Inform the student of the process of the hearing and advise they are able to bring a support person or representative.
  - Prepare a file for each party involved in the Review (including the student) containing all relevant documents and reports received by the Academic Student Advisor and Panel convenor, including the student's submission if available. At the conclusion of the Review process, Panel members must return their files to the Panel Convener. One copy will be retained for official records, while the remaining copies will be securely destroyed. The student may retain their copy of the documents if they choose.

### 5.4 Hearings

- The FTPC holds a hearing to review evidence, hear the student's response, and consider additional input from relevant parties.
- The Panel will formulate questions for the student and determine if any authors of submitted documents or reports should be interviewed. Questions will focus only on issues raised in the documentation.
- Interviews will be scheduled with the student and any identified authors, conducted in person where possible or via phone/video conferencing if necessary. Transportation costs for the student between campuses will be covered by the relevant College if required.

- The interviews will focus on assessing the student's suitability for professional or clinical placements and continuation in their course of study, based on the issues outlined in the documents and reports.

### 5.5 Outcomes

- **No action required:** If no fitness to practise concerns are substantiated.
- **Supportive measures:** Developmental interventions, such as mentoring or additional training.
- **Formal warning:** A written warning outlining future expectations.
- **Temporary suspension:** Pending resolution or remediation of the issue.
- **Program exclusion:** For severe breaches of professional standards that cannot be remedied.

### 5.6 Students with repeat infractions

- Repeat offences under a SCUVS Fitness to Practise policy can have serious consequences, as they indicate a persistent failure to meet the professional and ethical standards expected of veterinary students. Such offences may lead to escalating disciplinary actions, including warnings, additional training or supervision requirements, or suspension/expulsion from the program.

### 5.7 Appeals

- Students have the right to appeal decisions made under this policy by following the university's established appeals process. Appeals must be submitted in writing within 14 days of the decision.

## 6. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

- All documentation related to FTP cases must be securely stored in accordance with university policies.
- Access to FTP records is restricted to authorized personnel.

## 7. Policy Review and Approval

- The FTP policy must be reviewed every three years by the FTPC.
- Revisions require approval from the Veterinary Leadership Committee.

## 8. Communication and Training

- The policy is made available to all students, staff, and placement supervisors via the university's online platform.
- Regular training sessions on professional behaviour and ethics are mandatory for all veterinary students.

## 9. Inherent Requirements - Veterinary Sciences

There are inherent requirements for the BVetMed students [Veterinary Sciences Inherent Requirements](#). Students are able to discuss these requirements with the SCU support team prior to apply for, or accepting, a place within these courses. Where appropriate, approved reasonable adjustment plans will be offered to students with documented requirements. More information can be found here [Support for Students with Additional Requirements- Procedures](#)

*Appendix 1 provides the scope of inherent requirements vs Fitness to Practise and Appendix 3 provides examples as listed below relating to different issues that may arise.*

Fitness to practise includes the ability to meet the inherent requirements in physical, cognitive, emotional, and social domains, including but not limited to:

- **Physical and Mental Health:** Students must maintain physical and mental well-being sufficient to perform clinical tasks, respond to emergencies, and manage animal handling safely as agreed in the WIL statement. Conditions that may impede these functions **must** be disclosed to the university and managed effectively to avoid compromising safety and effectiveness in practice. See Example 1, 2 and 3.
- **Interpersonal Skills:** Students must demonstrate professional interpersonal skills in both academic and WIL settings, effectively communicating with peers, staff, clients, and other stakeholders in a respectful and professional manner. See example 4
- **Ability to Undertake Placement Requirements:** Students must be able to fulfill the demands of placements, including but not limited to animal handling, clinical duties, and engagement with clients, without significant restrictions. See example 5

## 10. Media Policy

Students are expected to use social and traditional media responsibly and professionally as per SCU [policy](#) and [procedure](#) AND the requirements of the WIL Fit To Practise Statement.

- Any articles, posts, comments, or interactions must align with the student code of conduct, professional standards expected of veterinary practitioners and should not compromise the reputation of the university, its staff, placement agencies, or the profession. See example 6
- Confidentiality and privacy of clients, animals, and placement sites must be maintained at all times. Breaches will be taken seriously and may lead to disciplinary action. See example 7

## 11. Criminal Offences

- Students must disclose any criminal offences that could impact their fitness to practise veterinary medicine.
- Criminal behaviour that may jeopardise the health, safety, or well-being of others will be grounds for reviewing a student's eligibility to continue their studies or placements. See example 8

## 12. Health and Safety Compliance

- **Occupational Requirements:** Students must meet occupational health and safety standards, including infection control, biosecurity, and hygiene requirements. Failure to comply with these standards may endanger public health, workplace safety, or animal welfare. See example 9
- **Risk to Health and Safety:** Any condition, behaviour, or practice by a student that places themselves, others, or animals at risk will be reviewed. This may include physical or mental



health issues, or any actions (verbal or non-verbal) that could disrupt university or WIL activities.  
See example 10

### 13. Professional and Ethical Conduct

- **Compliance with Ethical Standards:** Students must conduct themselves according to the ethical guidelines of the veterinary profession, including honesty, integrity, and respect for all persons and animals involved in their training and practice. See example 11 and 12
- **Behavioural Expectations:** Any behaviour that is deemed disruptive or poses a risk to individuals associated with university or WIL activities will not be tolerated. This includes actions within both the academic and placement settings. See example 13 and 14

### 14. University and Placement Agency Policy Compliance

Students must adhere to all relevant university policies and those of placement agencies where WIL is conducted. This includes observing:

- Codes of conduct specific to the placement site,
- University policies on safety, confidentiality, and professionalism,
- Placement agency rules and guidelines that govern appropriate student engagement.

### 15. Related Documents

[Rules – Academic and Non-Academic Misconduct](#)

[Social Media Policy](#) and [Media Policy](#)

[Social Media Procedures](#) and [Media Procedures](#)

[Student Rights and Responsibilities Charter](#)

[Support for Students with Additional Requirements- Procedures](#)

[Student Academic Experience Policy](#)

[Student support services](#)

[Work Integrated Learning Framework](#)

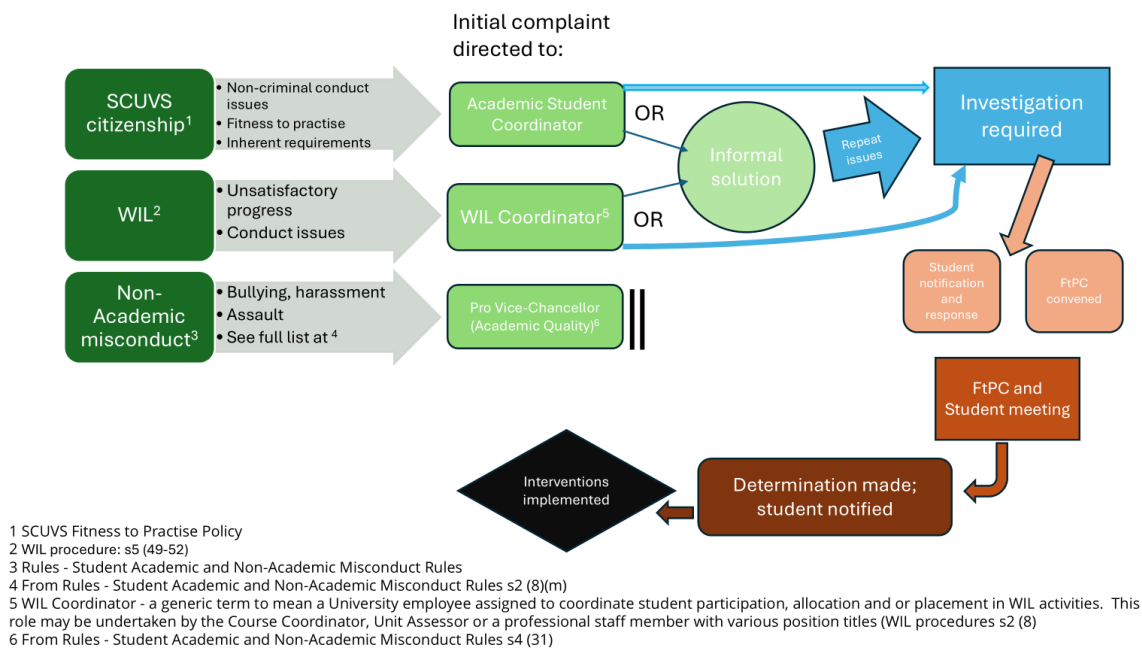
[Work Integrated Learning Procedures](#)

## Appendix 1: Inherent Requirements and Fitness to Practice

### Key Differences IR vs FtP

Aspect	Inherent Requirements	Fitness to Practise
Scope	Focuses on the academic and technical skills needed to complete the program.	Focuses on the ability to safely and ethically perform professional duties as a working professional.
Adjustments	Reasonable adjustments can be made without compromising requirements.	No adjustments are allowed that would compromise safety or ethical practice.
Evaluation Context	Assessed within the context of meeting course requirements.	Assessed in relation to readiness for clinical and professional practice.
Primary Focus	Program completion and meeting academic standards.	Safe, ethical, and professional conduct in practice.
Examples of Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cognitive limitations affecting knowledge acquisition.</li> <li>Physical inability to perform specific tasks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unprofessional behavior or ethical breaches.</li> <li>Impairment from mental health or substance abuse issues.</li> </ul>
Relevance to Profession	Ensures students are prepared to develop into competent professionals.	Protects the profession, public trust, and animal welfare.

## Appendix 2: Flowchart for reporting and investigation



### Appendix 3: Examples of Non-Compliant Behaviour and Actions (FtP)

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#### EXAMPLE 1:

A student suffers from general anxiety and phobia of snakes. Without being aware, they uncover a cage that has been dropped off by a wildlife carer and a small carpet python is doing their best to escape, with their head partly out of the cage. The student suffers a severe panic attack and are sent home. The University WIL coordinator is informed by the Director of Professional Experience and they meet to discuss their concerns. The trainee also meets with the University WIL coordinator who refers the trainee to a counsellor. The trainee meets again with the WIL coordinator and says the counsellor is helping them develop strategies for managing anxiety.

*Resolution example: When the trainee returns to the clinic, the WIL coordinator and the student coordinator at the clinic have made arrangements to additionally support the trainee and they continue with their placement and studies. The student proactively arranges counselling sessions to continue to work on their phobia and anxiety. The Academic Student Advisor is informed but not further action is required.*

#### EXAMPLE 2:

A student has been to attend a mixed rural practice clinic for WIL, when she discovers she is 8 weeks pregnant. The student is keen to continue her course but is conscious that there will be additional risks such as zoonotic diseases, handling some medications, radiation safety and anaesthetic agents. The student undertakes a discussion with her WIL coordinator and the [Academic Student Advisor](#) is informed. Direction is given for the WIL coordinator, the placement provider, her doctor and the University WHS team meet to discuss the risks and adjustments needed for the student, which may include wearing appropriate PPE, avoiding some procedures and implementing restriction on lifting heavy things and over exertion.

*Resolution example: Open communication and cooperation between the student, university, placement provider, and medical professionals are essential to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment. Adjustments are made, including:*

- *Restricting the student from tasks involving high zoonotic risks (e.g., assisting with abortions in livestock or handling potentially infectious fluids).*
- *Avoiding procedures that require the handling of prostaglandins, cytotoxic medications, or exposure to radiation or anaesthetic agents.*
- *Providing ergonomic support and restricting heavy lifting or physically demanding tasks.*
- *Ensuring the student has access to appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).*

*A clear plan is developed outlining the student's responsibilities, limitations, and how she will participate in alternative learning opportunities. The placement provider and the supervising veterinarian are briefed to ensure they are aware of the adjustments and can support the student appropriately. The student's progress and health are monitored throughout the placement, with regular check-ins from the*

*WIL coordinator and the placement supervisor. The student is encouraged to communicate any concerns or challenges promptly.*

#### **EXAMPLE 3:**

A student is on a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement at a busy regional mixed-animal clinic. Over several weeks, the student has been handling a heavy workload, including assisting in surgeries, performing routine health checks, and attending some afterhours emergency cases. They have also been struggling with personal challenges, including homesickness and financial stress, which have begun to impact their sleep and concentration.

One afternoon, while assisting with the handling of a nervous horse for a routine dental procedure, the student appears distracted. Despite instructions from the supervising veterinarian to stay alert and positioned safely, the student momentarily loses focus. The horse spooks, leading to a near miss where the student and veterinarian could have been injured.

Following the incident, the clinic manager and the supervising veterinarian speak privately with the student. The student admits to feeling overwhelmed and fatigued, describing difficulty managing the demands of the placement and personal challenges. The student placement team is advised and the Program Director is informed.

***Resolution example:** The student is referred to the university's support services, including counselling and academic advising, to address their challenges, their placement is temporarily paused to allow time for recovery and the implementation of a well-being plan. The student returns to the clinic with a plan that has been communicated with the supervisor, clinic staff and placements team. The student has regular check ins with the supervisor to ensure that they are able to undertake their duties.*

*The incident highlights the importance of mental well-being in maintaining a safe clinical environment. The clinic updates its orientation for placement students to include discussions about well-being and support systems.*

#### **EXAMPLE 4:**

During a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement at a busy small-animal hospital, a student is tasked with assisting in routine and emergency procedures. The placement requires the student to work closely with clinic staff, clients, and animals in a high-pressure environment. Over the course of several days, the student becomes disruptive - the frequently interrupt team discussions with unrelated comments, ignore instructions during procedures, and use their phone for personal purposes in the treatment room.

One morning, during an emergency admission, the student is asked to remove wet bedding from a cage and prepare it for the return of the animal after surgery and the student walks off to play on their phone, claiming their skills were being underutilised and they were not there to learn to clean kennels. The clinic's student coordinator makes a formal complaint to the Program Director.

***Resolution example:** The student is suspended from their placement pending an investigation as requested by the program Director. The FTPC is convened and after following the process, the student attends a meeting with the FTPC to assess their fitness to practice. The student's placement is*

*terminated, and they are placed on temporary suspension, which means they are unable to progress in their degree that term (or for the duration of the suspension).*

#### **EXAMPLE 5:**

A student is due to head to an equine practice for placement when they injure their back playing football. The student informs the placement team and liaises with their medical practitioner and with the student support team at SCU to implement appropriate and reasonable adjustments, so they can continue their placements.

*Resolution examples: With guidelines provided by the medical practitioner and WHS, specific physical limitations and reasonable adjustments can be developed and with collaboration between the placement team and the supervisor at the equine practice, a plan addressing the student's needs while ensuring safety and compliance with fitness-to-practice requirements can be implemented. These may include – restrictions on lifting heavy weights, regular breaks, restriction on activities with higher risk of re-injury. The student communicates regularly with their placement supervisor and WIL coordinator to ensure adjustments are effective and address any emerging concerns. The SCU student support team checks in periodically to assess the student's well-being and progress.*

#### **EXAMPLE 6:**

A student is completing their Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement at a busy small-animal clinic. They have recently assisted with the care of a dog named Max, who underwent a complicated surgery. During their placement, the student takes a photo of Max post-surgery (without showing the client or identifying details) and posts it on their personal social media account with the caption:

*"Had a long day at the clinic today! This brave boy just came out of surgery—so rewarding to help these little fighters! #VetLife #RewardingWork"*

Although intended the post to highlight enthusiasm for their future career, a client visiting the clinic later that week recognizes Max in the photo, tells Max's owner, who files a complaint with the clinic manager. The client expresses concern over their pet's image being shared online without consent, citing a breach of privacy and professionalism. The clinic's student coordinator reports the incident to the SCU placement team, who inform the Program Director in writing.

*Resolution example: The clinic suspends the placement. The program director makes the decision to informally respond to the incident. The student receives a formal warning and/or is required to undertake a reflective piece on the importance of confidentiality and social media awareness.*

#### **EXAMPLE 7:**

During a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement at a veterinary hospital, a student observes a case where a cat named Whiskers requires urgent surgery for a serious injury. The client, a local resident, expresses distress during the consultation, explaining that they are struggling to afford the recommended treatment. After discussing options with the supervising veterinarian, the clinic agrees to a payment plan to help the client manage the costs.

Later that day, the student mentions the situation to a friend outside the clinic, including the client's financial struggles and the clinic's decision to allow a payment plan. The friend shares this information with others, and a rumour begins to spread through the community, implying that the client "can't afford to take care of their pets. The rumour reaches the client, who is embarrassed and upset. They contact the clinic to express their anger, stating that they feel humiliated and their trust in the clinic has been violated. The clinic notifies the university about the breach of confidentiality and the Program Director is informed.

***Resolution example:** The student is removed from their placement, and the Program Director initiates a fitness to practice investigation into the breach. After investigation and following the process, the student is asked to meet with the FTPC to address their actions. The clinic decides to terminate the student's placement and expresses concern about hosting future students from the university if confidentiality cannot be assured.*

*The student must repeat the WIL at another time, which may limit their progression through their degree. They are temporarily suspended and required to complete a reflective piece on the importance of client confidentiality.*

#### **EXAMPLE 8:**

A veterinary student is in their third year of study and performing well academically. Outside of university, they are charged with a criminal offence for reckless driving while under the influence of alcohol, which results in property damage but no injuries. However, the student decides not to disclose the charge to the university, assuming it will not affect their studies since it occurred outside the academic environment.

Several months later, during a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement, the student is scheduled to participate in a community outreach program that involves traveling in clinic vehicles to rural areas. The clinic requires a valid driver's license and a clean driving record to ensure safety and compliance with insurance policies. When the student's driving record is checked as part of routine procedures, the charge is discovered, raising questions about the student's integrity and fitness to practice. The clinic contacts the university to express concern about the student's lack of disclosure and this is reported in writing to the Program Director.

***Resolution examples:** By failing to disclose the offence, the student demonstrated a lack of transparency and accountability, key attributes required in veterinary practice. The student is removed from the placement while the university investigates the matter after initial review by the program director. Depending on the outcome, the student may face penalties, including suspension, probation, or the requirement to complete additional professional development before resuming studies or placements.*

***Alternative:** The student discloses the offence and the suspension of their driver's licence to the university placements team. The student is remorseful and demonstrates an improved understanding of professional responsibilities, the student is permitted to continue placements, which are arranged to accommodate the lack of ability to drive a vehicle.*

#### EXAMPLE 9:

A student is on a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement at a dairy farm. On the first morning, the supervisor invites the student to join them at the dairy for a veterinary visit to conduct a herd health investigation. The student was reminded to bring gumboots and overalls that are clean to the placement.

When they arrive at the dairy, the student changes into overalls and gumboots that are visibly dirty, with mud and dried faeces from a previous placement. The farmer notices the condition of the student's attire and raises concerns, stating, "We have strict biosecurity protocols here. You can't walk into my shed dressed like that."

The farmer calls the placement office, and the placement is terminated. The farm withdraws from the placement agreement with the university as they do not want further students attending the farm. The student's failure to ensure their gear was clean posed a risk of spreading infectious agents between farms, potentially compromising herd health and public safety and their dismissive attitude toward biosecurity protocols demonstrated a lack of understanding of their importance in practice. Their behaviour created tension with the farmer, potentially damaging the reputation of the university.

*Resolution example: The program director is informed and decides to informally resolve the complaint. The student receives a warning and must complete additional training on biosecurity and hygiene protocols. A reflective assignment is required to demonstrate an understanding of the importance of biosecurity and professional responsibility in veterinary practice.*

*The student must repeat the WIL at another time, which may limit their progression through their degree.*

#### EXAMPLE 10:

A student is midway through their Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement at a busy mixed-animal practice. The student demonstrates strong technical skills but struggles with the high-pressure environment, particularly when procedures do not go as planned.

One day, during routine dog anaesthesia monitoring, the supervising veterinarian, who is completing the castration, gives the student a pop quiz on what they would do in certain anaesthesia situations. The student, visibly frustrated, responds by slamming their clipboard onto the table and raising their voice at the veterinarian, saying, "You're always pressuring me! Back off so I can think!". Before pushing roughly past a vet nurse who is in the theatre and walking off. The clinic supervisor reports the incident to the Program Director.

*Resolution example: The student's verbal outburst and intimidating actions disrupted the professional environment and created a sense of unease among the team. The student failed to demonstrate the respect and collaboration required to work effectively in a clinical setting. The supervising veterinarian allows the student to continue their placement after a long discussion about their behaviour and alerts the placements team as to the issues that have arisen.*

*The Program Director initiates an investigation. The FTPC meets with the student and undertakes interviews with the supervising clinician. The student is required to complete training on conflict*



*resolution, stress management, and professional behaviour. A formal warning is placed on their academic record, and their fitness to practice is monitored closely in subsequent placements.*

#### **EXAMPLE 11:**

A student is on a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement at a busy animal shelter. One of the kittens is due to be rehomed today and will be sent with worming tablets that are labelled in a pill jar. The student thinks that the tablets prescribed for the kitten have been incorrectly labelled. Instead of reporting the error to the supervising veterinarian, the student decides to fix the label themselves, reasoning, “It’s just a small mistake, and fixing it will save time.”

Later, the new owner of the kitten express confusion about the instructions on the medication bottle, stating that the dose is twice as much as their large adult cat. Upon reviewing the case, the veterinarian discovers the corrected label and realises it was changed without their knowledge or approval. The owner of the kitten threatens to take to social media as it could have made their kitten unwell. The supervising veterinarian raises concerns about the student’s understanding of ethical responsibilities in veterinary practice with the Placements Team. When questioned, the student admits to altering the label but defends their actions by saying they were trying to be helpful and avoid inconveniencing the staff. The clinic manager contacts the university, who reports this to the Program Director.

*Resolution example: By altering the label without reporting the error, the student acted outside their scope of practice and compromised the integrity of the veterinary team, posed a risk to the animal’s health. Their decision to conceal the error rather than address it openly undermined the principles of honesty and integrity required in the veterinary profession. The shelter suspends the student’s participation in pharmacy-related tasks and may decide not to host other students for future placements.*

*The program director initiates an investigation. The student meets with the FTPC and is interviewed. The student is not remorseful for their actions and does not offer any reflection on the consequences of their action. The student is excluded from the degree. The student then initiates an appeal on the decision of the FTPC.*

#### **EXAMPLE 12:**

A student is on a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement at a small-animal clinic. One of their daily responsibilities is to complete the cage card sheets including documenting treatments and medications administered. One afternoon, the supervising veterinarian asks the student to treat a post operative dog with an oral medication that is in their medicine tray and record this administration on their cage card. The student becomes distracted by another task and forgets to update the medical record. Later that day, the ward veterinarian, thinking the dog had not had the pain medication post operatively, gives the dog another dose of medication, causing an accidental overdose. The Program Director is informed in writing.

*Resolution example: The student’s lack of follow-through on a fundamental responsibility undermined the safety and reliability of the veterinary team. The incident highlights a lack of attention to detail and*



*adherence to professional standards, raising questions about the student's readiness to practice safely in a clinical setting.*

*The student is temporarily removed from tasks on their placement involving medication administration and documentation until they complete remedial training. The student is required to complete a workshop or training module on accurate record-keeping and medication safety protocols and is paired with a mentor for closer supervision and guidance when documenting treatments during their placement.*

*The Program Director initiates a formal warning and after investigation and interview by the FTPC, the student on academic probation with fitness to practice monitored during future placements. The placements team and clinic supervisor conduct regular check-ins to ensure the student adheres to documentation protocols and demonstrates improvement. The student is encouraged to use time-management tools and strategies to prevent distractions during critical tasks.*

#### **EXAMPLE 13:**

A student is on a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement at a mixed-animal clinic. The student demonstrates good clinical skills but struggles with punctuality and professional communication. Repeatedly, the student arrives late for a scheduled surgery, disrupting the team's preparation. When questioned by the veterinarian, the student responds defensively, saying, *"It's not a big deal; the surgery hasn't even started."* Their dismissive tone creates tension among the staff.

The next morning, the veterinarian is flying out to a remote station to undertake pregnancy diagnosis on a large mob of cattle. The student is told to be ready to be picked up at 5am, due to scheduled take off time at the airport and to avoid the heat eddies when flying later in the day. When the vet arrives to collect the student, they are still in their pyjamas, have not had breakfast and haven't packed lunch for the day. The student is left behind and misses the placement. The placements team are alerted and as this is a repeat complaint about this student, the Program Director is informed in writing.

***Resolution example:** The student must repeat the WIL at another time, which may limit their progression through their degree.*

*The student must undertake a time management enquiry and assign themselves a time-accountability buddy. They are requested to provide a time management plan for the next 3 weeks of placement. The student's fitness to practice may be formally reviewed by the university, potentially resulting in suspension from the program or additional academic probation.*

#### **EXAMPLE 14:**

A student is on a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement at a mixed-animal clinic. The student is expected to assist with routine tasks, observe procedures, and actively participate in client consultations under the supervision of the veterinary team. During the placement, the student is frequently seen using their phone during work hours. Despite reminders from the staff to focus on the tasks at hand, the student continues to text and check social media while others are busy caring for animals.

When asked to assist during a vaccination clinic, the student shows minimal interest, performing tasks with reluctance and making little effort to engage with the veterinarian or clients. In one instance, the veterinarian asks the student to prepare a vaccination tray, but the student appears distracted and forgets key items, delaying the process.

The staff also notice that the student often avoids taking initiative, waiting to be explicitly told what to do rather than looking for ways to contribute. For example, instead of helping to clean up after a procedure, the student sits in the corner scrolling through their phone.

The practice manager reports this in the student feedback when the placement is finished.

***Resolution example:** The placement team report this to the Program Director. The student is required to meet with the Placement Coordinator. Specific examples of the student's actions are highlighted, and expectations for improvement are clearly outlined. A Behavioural improvement plan may be developed, detailing specific behaviours the student must demonstrate (e.g., punctuality, active participation, avoiding phone use) and a timeline for review. The student is instructed to refrain from using their phone during work hours except for emergencies or placement-related tasks authorized by supervisors.*

*If the complaint happens again, the student is assigned tasks with closer supervision and limited responsibilities that directly impact workflows and ability to develop procedural skills, which may limit their progression in the degree. The student's fitness to practice may be formally reviewed by the university, potentially resulting in suspension from the program or additional academic probation.*