

Frequently Asked Questions:

Studying Certificate III in Wildlife and Exhibited Animal Care



Course Overview

What is the Certificate III in Wildlife and Exhibited Animal Care?

The Certificate III in Wildlife and Exhibited Animal Care is the industry qualification for people seeking careers such as:

- Zookeeper
- Wildlife Keeper
- Animal Attendant
- Wildlife Rehabilitation Worker
- Animal Care Professional

The course is designed to provide the practical skills and knowledge required to work with animals in zoos and wildlife facilities.

Does completing the course guarantee me a job?

No. The Certificate III is considered a pathway into the industry and is often a requirement for zoo-based animal care roles. However, completion of the course does not guarantee employment.

How long does the course take?

12 months full-time equivalent. Approximately 30+ hours per week commitment when class time, placement and assessment work are combined.

Is the course online?

No. The Certificate III is delivered face-to-face at partnered zoo locations around Australia. Students are required to attend all scheduled classes, placements, and practical assessments.

Entry Requirements

Do I need a Certificate II before applying?

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To enter the Certificate III, applicants generally need either:

Option 1: A completed Certificate II in Animal Care (or an equivalent accredited course).

Option 2: At least 250 hours of direct animal care experience within the last 12 months.

Examples include:

- Zoo volunteering
- Wildlife rehabilitation
- Animal shelters
- Animal rescue organisations
- Wildlife parks
- Animal husbandry roles

Experience must involve direct animal care rather than visitor engagement or customer service activities alone.

What evidence do I need for my 250 hours?

You should provide a reference letter that includes:

- Organisation name
- Your role
- Hours completed
- Tasks undertaken

References from employers or volunteer supervisors are acceptable.

Does zoo volunteering count?

Yes. Zoo volunteering can count toward the experience requirement if:

- It includes direct animal care/husbandry activities
- You can provide evidence of hours completed

Does personal animal husbandry count?

Potentially yes, provided appropriate evidence can be supplied.

Examples:

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- Farm animals
- Horses
- Reptiles
- Livestock

Additional assessment of the relevance of the experience may occur during application review.

Will my application be rejected if I don't have 250 hours?

Not automatically. If proof of 250 hours is not provided, TTI will contact you to clarify your experience and request any supporting documentation that may be available.

If you do not have documentation to verify the 250 hours, we will undertake a further review of your application and consider other relevant factors before making a decision. These may include:

- Previous study
- Related experience
- Volunteer work
- Industry involvement

However, applicants who meet the stated entry requirements and can provide supporting evidence are likely to be more competitive.

I am studying for a degree in animal science/conservation biology. Can I still apply for this course?

Applicants who are finalising or have completed a university qualification may still be eligible to apply, particularly where their studies are in a relevant field such as Animal Science, Zoology, Wildlife Science, Veterinary Science, or a related discipline. All applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis and will require further review to determine suitability.

I have completed a Cert III in Animal Care or Animal Studies. Can that be used?

Yes. Relevant qualifications may be accepted and may also make you eligible for credit transfer. These qualifications include:

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- Cert III in Animal Care
- Cert III in Animal Studies
- Cert III in Animal Care Services
- Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing

I have worked in an animal shelter previously. Is that relevant?

Yes. Animal shelter employment and animal husbandry experience are considered relevant animal care experience.

Does current zookeeping experience help?

Yes. Current employment as a zookeeper is highly regarded during the application process.

Applications

When do applications close?

Applications close for Jan/Feb 2027 intake on the 14 September at 5:00pm

Is it first come, first served for applications?

No. Applications are assessed on merit. Taking time to provide thoughtful, detailed responses is recommended.

What makes a strong applicant?

- Strong communication skills
- Ability to work in a team
- Initiative
- Reliability
- Willingness to learn
- Demonstrated animal care experience
- Genuine passion for the industry
- Ability to follow directions
- Professionalism

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Can I update my application after submission?

Yes. If you've forgotten information or supporting documents, contact: tti@zoo.nsw.gov.au to provide the additional information.

Application Process

What are the stages?

Stage 1: Written application submission. If shortlisted, will progress to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Recorded Hireflix video interview. If shortlisted, will progress to Stage 3.

Stage 3: Face-to-face interview (or online if required).

Stage 4: Final outcomes emailed to applicants.

Is the recorded interview assessed by AI?

No. All submissions are reviewed by a real person, specifically the site Support Officer.

Are previous applicants given priority?

No. Applications are assessed on merit each year.

If I apply for multiple locations, do I attend multiple interviews?

Yes. Separate interviews may be required for each location.

When will I hear back about the success of my application?

TTI advised applicants are generally notified of outcomes by late October/early November.

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Study Locations

Where can I study?

Course locations include:

- Taronga Zoo Sydney
- Taronga Western Plains Zoo (Dubbo)
- Melbourne Zoo & Werribee Open Range Zoo
- Perth Zoo
- Adelaide Zoo & Monarto Safari Park

How many places are available?

Most locations: 24-26 students

Sydney: up to 30 students

How many intakes are offered?

Sydney - two intakes per year in February and July.

Other locations - One intake per year in Jan/Feb

If I am applying to study at non-Taronga locations, do I still apply through Taronga?

Yes. TTI is the Registered Training Organisation delivering the course at all specified locations on our website. All applications are submitted through TTI.

Course Structure

What do students' study?

The course contains:

- 12 Core Units
- 4 Elective Units

Each unit includes:

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- 1 to 3 assessments
- Independent research
- Theory work outside class

Full course descriptions can be found on our [website](#).

Students should expect several hours per week of self-directed study.

How are assessments graded?

Assessments are graded as either satisfactory or not yet satisfactory. Students generally receive up to three attempts for theory assessments.

Do students receive marks or percentages?

No. Assessments are competency-based rather than percentage-based.

Placements and Practical Learning

How much workplace placement is included?

When studying at TTI, students complete 30 placement days over 12 months.

Can I choose my placement days?

Students may provide details of unavailable dates. TTI will try to accommodate these requests where possible, but cannot guarantee availability around all nominated dates.

Are there classes outside the block weeks?

Outside theory blocks, students will still need to complete:

- Practical placements
- Assessments independently
- Independent study

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Credit Transfers

Can I apply for a credit transfer?

Yes. Please provide the following so TTI can assess equivalency:

- Academic transcripts
- Statements of attainment
- Evidence of completed units (USI transcripts preferred)

Does credit transfer reduce fees?

Yes. Course fees are reduced for approved credit transfers. Note there is a Credit Transfer Admin fee of \$150/unit of competency

Can I still attend classes if I receive credit transfer?

Yes. You are welcome to attend classes and participate in learning activities.

Fees and Funding

How much does the course cost?

Full course fee is \$8,350.

How is the payment made?

The standard payment plan is made in four equal instalments paid across four months. Alternative arrangements may be discussed on a case-by-case basis. You can also make the payment in full if you wish.

Is funding available?

For NSW-based students, eligible students may access Smart and Skilled funding. Which

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can be up to approximately \$2,620, depending on eligibility. Fee exemptions may also apply. Visit our [website](#) for more information on funding opportunities.

Student Support

What if I have learning needs?

When submitting your application, students are encouraged to disclose any learning support needs, disabilities, and/or medical conditions so that reasonable adjustments can be discussed and considered where appropriate. Applicants should also refer to the **Essential Course Requirements** document available on our website, which outlines the inherent requirements and expectations associated with successful participation in the course.

What if I have allergies?

Applicants should disclose allergies during the application process. The TTI team will assess reasonable adjustments and support requirements.

Uniforms and Equipment

What uniform is supplied?

TTI provides:

- TTI polo shirt (block-delivery students receive two shirts)
- TTI fleece jacket

What uniform and equipment do students need to supply?

- Work boots
- Neutral-coloured shorts or pants (Black or Khaki), bright high-visibility colours are discouraged
- Wet weather gear (Black, Navy or Khaki)
- Hat
- Sunscreen
- Laptop

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Working with Animals

Will I be required to administer drugs or use needles?

No. Students may observe animal health procedures but do not perform veterinary procedures as part of the course.

Do I need access to an animal at home?

Yes. Some assessments require you to be able to access an animal at home to perform:

- Enrichment and behavioural conditioning assessments

This can be:

- Your pet
- A family member's pet
- A friend's pet
- Another approved animal you can access regularly

You must also have access to a backup animal if your original animal is no longer available.

Do I need to film activities with my own pet?

Yes. Some assessments require the filming of your animal and submission of evidence.

Is it possible to complete Cert II and Cert III at the same time?

No. To enrol in the Certificate III, you must have completed the Certificate II before the Certificate III commences. If you are currently undertaking the Certificate II and have an intended completion date prior to the start of the Certificate III, you may still apply for the Certificate III. Please note that you will be required to provide evidence of successful completion of your Certificate II.

Can a first-year university student complete Cert II simultaneously?

Potentially, would be dependent on your timetable, available time and commitment. The online Cert II option (self-paced 12 months duration) might be best.

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Is there a specific university degree that is preferred when applying?

Applicants who are finalising or have completed a university qualification may still be eligible to apply, particularly where their studies are in a relevant field such as Animal Science, Zoology, Wildlife Science, Veterinary Science, or a related discipline. All applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the relevance of your previous or current studies to the course.

Can applicants choose "Any Melbourne Location" and be allocated wherever a place is available?

If you choose the location as Melbourne, you are selecting Zoos Victoria. There is only one option. Some classes/weeks will be held at Melbourne Zoo and some at Werribee Open Range Zoo. You will be told the dates and locations on enrolment.

What practical placement schedule does Melbourne typically follow?

Typically, students will do 2-week blocks on placement, 3 times across the year totalling 30 days.

Are local applicants prioritised over interstate applicants?

No, they are not, all applicants are chosen on a merit-based selection process, but if interstate you must be committed to attending all activities.

How are bird flu outbreaks likely to affect placements at individual partner zoos?

This is an evolving situation, and we will take instructions from all our partner zoos if given. Taronga Conservation Society Australia has a Taskforce monitoring the situation. All students (from all locations) are asked to declare any exposure to Avian species outside the zoos. We are prepared to implement appropriate biosecurity measures to protect both our people and the animals in our care if required.

What happens if an applicant turns 18 after the course commencement date?

You need to turn 18 before your first placement date. Email tti@zoo.nsw.gov.au if unsure.

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What opportunities exist for Cert II study in South Australia?

TAFE SA offer Certificate II in Animal Care.