PG CABW 2026-2028

PRELIMINARY ECTS Veterinary Behaviourist

Course programme	Odisee Companion Animal Behaviour and Welfare Programme **Postgraduate Course Veterinary Behaviourist**
Module title	**PG CABW – VB M1 - Ethology of companion animals**
Level of module	Postgraduate level 6/7
Language	• Course materials: English • Formative assignments: English • Oral exam: English
Year of study – date module is delivered	• Academic year 2026-2027
Number of ECTS credits allocated to the module	8 credits = app. 200 to 240 study hours TLA 1 = 1 credit TLA 2 = 7 credits
Summary of key learning outcomes of the module	1. Introducing the concepts and essential subject matters necessary for an in-depth understanding of the biological bases of animal behaviour in general and the biology, ontogeny, phylogeny and ethogram of dogs and cats. 2. Develop an understanding of human animal interactions and appraisal of how these affect the behaviour and welfare of companion animals as a basis to advise professionals and non-professionals on how to achieve good animal welfare and human-animal relationships and prevent problems.
Specific learning outcomes of the module	Students will know and understand the subjects covered in this module and be able to: Students will know and understand the subjects covered in this module and be able to: 1. Demonstrate the current understanding of the biology and ethology of dogs and cats. 2. Interpret communicative behaviour. Recognise, evaluate, and report on the behavioural state of an animal, including normal behaviour and behaviour indicative of a positive and negative emotional state and ill-health.

	3. Demonstrate an understanding of how the processes of behavioural ontogeny and phylogeny affect the behaviour of specific species, evaluate their importance for the development of normal behaviour, the prevention of abnormal behaviour and optimizing individual welfare. 4. Critically evaluate the interaction between 'nature' and 'nurture' in general and how these influence the development of behavioural disorders in domestic animals. 5. Express an understanding of how the processes of domestication, natural and artificial selection affect the behaviour of animals. 6. Express an understanding of the physiology of the stress response and its effect on animal behaviour and welfare. Including how the interaction between the environment and emotions are associated with the behaviour expressed by animals. 7. Express an understanding of the different attitudes of humans towards companion animals throughout the history and in the present society. How attitudes towards companion animals affect the human animal bond/relationship, human-animal interactions, the behaviour and welfare of people and companion animals in a variety of situations.
Module content	TLA 1: • The field of applied ethology and its importance in relation to animal welfare. • The principles of ethology including: general principles of behaviour genetics and the evolution of behaviour. The process of domestication and its effect on behaviour. The concept of dominance. • The field of companion animal welfare and its importance in relation to the welfare of companion animals including key concepts: the model of animal welfare. TLA 2: • The Quality-of-Life model, the interaction between stress, emotions, behaviour and welfare. • The biology and behaviour of dogs and cats including: body structures, movement, sensory physiology and abilities, motivation and organization of behaviour, nutrition and health. • The ontogeny and phylogeny of behaviour of dogs and cats: the process of domestication of the specific species, sensitive periods, socialisation, attachment, breeds and

	breed differences. Behavioural development. The effect on the behaviour of dogs and cats resulting from the interaction between biological, genetic, environmental influences and the domestic environment. • The ethogram of normal behaviour of dogs and cats including: communicative behaviour, social behaviour, sexual behaviour, ingestive behaviour, eliminative behaviour, locomotive behaviour, maternal behaviour, behaviour indicative of a positive and negative emotional state. • Anthrozoology the science studying the interaction between humans and animals and its relevance to companion animal behaviour and welfare. • The psychology of the human-animal bond and its effect on the behaviour and welfare of humans and companion animals, including: the human animal bond in historical and cultural perspective and tests and measurements to evaluate the human-animal bond.
Planned learning activities and teaching methods	Distance learning consisting of: • Recorded lectures • Reading lists • Peer-to-peer learning activity • Self-assessment quizzes
Assessment methods	TLA 1: • Self-assessment quiz TLA 2: • Formative assignment • Oral exam
Essential study materials	• Course book • Course materials provided by the lecturers
Module coordinators	Jolanda Pluijmakers (jolanda.pluijmakers@odisee.be) and David Appleby (david.appleby@live.com).
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