Assistance Animals on Campus Policy

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# Introduction

The University of Leicester is committed to providing an inclusive and safe environment for all students, staff and visitors. We recognise the important and valuable role assistance animals have, in supporting and assisting disabled people, and we welcome assistance animals on to our campus.

This policy provides information and guidance relating to assistance animals within the University.

This policy applies to assistance animals only. The University prohibits individuals from bringing any other animals, including emotional support/companion pets and therapy animals, onto its premises, except in specific circumstances, set out in the University’s Pet Free Campus Policy.

# Assistance Animals

Assistance animals, typically dogs, are an auxiliary aid, trained to assist a disabled person with specific tasks and day-to-day activities. They can be trained to help people with conditions such as sight/hearing loss, epilepsy, diabetes, limited physical mobility and psychological conditions by carrying out practical tasks, medical alerts and/or providing psychological assistance.

In order to qualify as an assistance animal, the animal would be trained to be able to undertake specific physical tasks to mitigate their owner’s disability or condition.

Assistance animals are highly trained, meaning they:

* have an appropriate temperament;
* will sit or lie quietly on the floor next to their owner;
* will not wander freely;
* are unlikely to foul in a public place;
* have appropriate veterinary care;
* have public liability insurance.

Assistance dogs may be trained by one of the eight charity members of [Assistance Dogs UK](https://www.assistancedogs.org.uk/). Members of this organisation have successfully passed an extensive accreditation process that covers all aspects of their training, dog welfare and administration, meeting exacting international standards. Many other charities and organisations also exist in the UK to train assistance dogs to the same high standards. It is the University’s preference that dogs are trained through ADUK or other organisations and charities. However, we also recognise that assistance dogs can be owner-trained without the input of a training organisation. Dogs trained in this way are entitled to the same legal protections as assistance dogs trained through ADUK or other organisations and will maintain the same high standards.

Assistance dogs near the end of their training may require opportunity to experience the working/learning environment and the University recognises the importance of facilitating their presence on campus as part of their training. Assistance dogs nearing the end of their training may be allowed on campus by agreement, depending on context. Owners should contact their line manager (staff) or AccessAbility (students) to seek permission.

# Legislation

Assistance dogs and their owners are protected under the Equality Act 2010. This legislation requires employers and service providers to make “reasonable adjustments” for assistance dog owners. This means that assistance dogs and their owners have the right to access all areas of campus, and its facilities and services, including University student accommodation, unless there is a justifiable health and safety risk. For example, some laboratory environments – in these cases a risk assessment should be undertaken and, wherever possible, adjustments put in place to enable the assistance dog into this environment.

Currently, UK legislation applies to assistance dogs only. Therapy and emotional support dogs/animals are not regarded as assistance dogs and therefore do not have the same access rights.

Similarly, legislation does not currently extend to other types of assistance animals more broadly. However the University welcomes all assistance animals where it can be assured that the animal meets all of the specific criteria for an assistance animal laid out in this policy, and in particular in relation to standard of training, behaviour and nature of physical tasks undertaken.

# Arrangements for assistance animals and their owners

Owners of assistance animals should notify their manager (staff) or the AccessAbility Centre (students) that they use an assistance animal, so that they can be provided with relevant support and information regarding facilities for their animal, such as relief spaces.

## 4.1 Roles and Responsibilities

 **Managers (staff)**

* Will make the assistance animal owner aware of this policy, including their rights and responsibilities as owner.
* Will support the owner by making colleagues aware, outlining etiquette around assistance animals and addressing any potential concerns.
* Will ensure that a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) is undertaken for the assistance animal and their owner, if required.
* Will raise any issues about the assistance animal with the owner in the first instance.

 **AccessAbility Centre (student)**

* Will signpost the student to this policy and assist students with their initial orientation, facilities available for their animal and any support needed.
* Discuss with the student their preferred approach, which may include awareness raising with other students about assistance animal etiquette.
* Where they are aware of the animal, will refer the student to the Departmental Safety Officer to undertake a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP), for the assistance animal and their owner, if required.

 **Assistance Animal Owner**

The animal is the owner’s responsibility. The owner must ensure that:

* The animal is under control at all times, with assistance dogs on a lead at all times unless it interferes with the dog’s tasking.
* The animal is identifiable as an assistance animal, e.g. harness, jacket, lead or other identifier.
* The animal uses a designated location for toileting and the user does not allow the animal to foul the University premises. In the event of such incident the owner must report this to the appropriate member of staff to make arrangements for cleaning.
* They have provisions for the animals requirements for toileting (e.g. dog litter bags) drinking and feeding.
* The animal is kept up to date with insurance, vaccinations, and flea/tick/worming treatments, where relevant.
* The animal is regularly groomed particularly within moulting season.
* A risk assessment is undertaken if access is required to a specialist teaching space e.g. chemistry lab, sports facilities. Student owners should liaise with a member of staff to complete the risk assessment.
* They engage in discussions about any issues such as fears or allergies.
* If they are a student requiring University accommodation and have an assistance animal, they note this on their accommodation application.
* If they are a student, they contact their Departmental Safety Officer to undertake a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP), if required.

**Members of the University community**

Assistance animals are not pets. Members of the UoL community should not:

* Feed, pet or praise assistance animals;
* Distract or startle an assistance animal; or
* Interfere with the assistance animal’s service.

# Complaints

## 5.1 Complaints by the assistance animal owner

Owners of assistance animals wishing to make a complaint about their treatment or that of their animal can report the incident through [Report and Support](https://reportandsupport.le.ac.uk/) and/or under the Dignity and Respect at Leicester Policy.

## 5.2 Complaints regarding the assistance animal

Issues and concerns about the animal’s behaviour should be raised with the animal owner in the first instance. If this is not possible, issues can be raised with the line manager, the AccessAbility Centre or Estates and Campus Services. Concerns relating to a fear of, or allergies to, dogs or other animals are best resolved informally. If the issue cannot be resolved informally it should be escalated and dealt with through the existing formal complaints process, but it should be noted that the rights of an assistance animal and their owner are legally protected.

The University reserves the right to remove or prohibit entry to an assistance animal if it poses a threat to the health & safety of others, for example where the animal is aggressive, where unresolved animal misbehaviour continues, or where it is established the animal does not meet the criteria for an assistance animal outlined in this policy.