

Policy on Assistance Animals (Dogs)



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

Purpose of Policy

The policy clarifies the University's legal position, provides guidance on the definition of an Assistance Animal/Dog and defines our responsibilities as a public sector body.

Overview

The University recognises that Assistance Dogs for disabled people who need them, must be able to access the University Estate and that relevant facilities should be provided for the animals and their handlers.

Scope: Mandatory Policy

All staff, students and visitors to the University who have an Assistance Animal.

Contact Officer	Victoria Buchanan	Director, Disability and Learning Support Service	Victoria.buchanan@ed.ac.uk
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Dates	Approved: 29-08-2017	Starts: 29-08-2017	Equality impact assessment: 26-07-2017	Amendments: 13/05/2025	Next Review: 2026/27
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Approving authority	University Executive
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Consultation undertaken	UoE Legal Services, Disability and Learning Support Service, Health and Safety, Estates, Accommodation Services, student with an assistance dog.
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Section responsible for policy maintenance & review	University Secretary's Group
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Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations	Health and Safety Policy (see Animals on Campus guidance), Reasonable Adjustments Policy.
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UK Quality Code	UK Quality Code for Higher Education
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Policies superseded by this policy	N/A
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Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk or telephone 0131 651 4490.
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Keywords	Assistance animal/dog; guide dog;
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Policy on Assistance Animals (Dogs)

1. Introduction

The University of Edinburgh generally prohibits individuals from bringing animals inside any University owned, leased or controlled buildings, vehicles or structures.

However, the University recognises that a dog kept and used by a disabled person (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) wholly or mainly for the purpose of assisting that person to carry out day to day activities (an “**Assistance Dog**”), will require access to the University’s estate, relevant buildings and University-owned student accommodation.

2. Assistance Dogs

Assistance Dogs are highly trained working dogs, performing specific tasks to assist disabled persons. Assistance Dogs usually have formal identification and are permitted to accompany their owners at all times and in all places within the United Kingdom (unless there is a genuine health and safety risk).

Assistance Dogs are often trained by members of Assistance Dogs (UK), a coalition of Assistance Dog organisations, (<http://www.assistancedogs.org.uk/>) or by an equivalent organisation in another country.

Animals trained by Assistance Dogs (UK) organisations should have a yellow ID booklet from the Assistance Dogs (UK) member organisation. This ID book contains information about the Assistance Dog and its owner, and details of the training organisation who trained the Assistance Dog. The owner may also choose to use other formal identification in the form of branded jackets, harness, or lead slips, but this is not mandatory.

In instances where the above Assistance Dog (UK) ID can be provided, the University will consider that the dog meets the definition of an Assistance Dog.

In instances where animals have been trained in other countries or via other routes, the University reserves the right to request further information in order to determine if the dog is appropriately trained. In some circumstances, the University may request an independent assessment to be carried out by the Assistance Dogs Assessment Association (at the University’s cost).

Owners of Assistance Dogs should contact the Disability and Learning Support Service (students) or their line manager (staff) at the earliest opportunity to discuss appropriate support measures and access.



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Members of the University community are reminded that they should not:

- touch or feed an Assistance Dog, unless invited to do so by their owner;
- deliberately distract or startle an Assistance Dog; or
- separate or attempt to separate an Assistance Dog from the person using the Assistance Dog's service.

3. Assistance Dogs on University premises

Assistance Dogs are permitted to access all University premises under the control of their handlers (or where necessary in order to control the Assistance Dog for a short period of time, someone other than the handler), who may be students, staff members or visitors to the University.

When Assistance Dogs are in University properties, their owners must comply with the following guidelines:

A. Information

Assistance Dog owners shall provide information about the animal and its tasks/duties, if reasonably requested by University staff.

B. Identification

Assistance Dog owners are encouraged to make their dogs easily recognisable while working on-campus, for example by using specific collars, harnesses, and/or identification tags while. It is noted this is not mandatory but can assist members of the University community in recognising a working dog on-campus.

C. Insurance

Assistance dog owners are responsible for ensuring that their assistance dogs are covered by full liability insurance.

D. Access restrictions

Assistance dog owners must respect access restrictions established by the University on grounds of health and safety. Assistance dog owners must ensure that Assistance Dogs do not enter staff and students' privately assigned spaces, such as bedrooms and flats within residences, without permission.

E. Animal misbehaviour

Preventing and correcting Assistance Dogs' misbehaviour is the owner's responsibility. Assistance Dog owners must make sure that their Assistance Dogs do not cause harm or injury to others and damage to University property.



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F. Animal care and supervision

Animal care is primarily the Assistance Dog owner's responsibility. The owner ensures regular health checks, vaccination and an adequate standard of grooming of the Assistance Dog. Assistance Dog owners must ensure the Assistance Dog has its requirements in relation to feeding, watering and toileting fully met. Owners must ensure that Assistance Dogs are kept on a lead at all times when walking around the University's estate or are safely restrained when unsupervised for short periods of time.

G. Cleanliness

Registered blind people are not required to clean up after their Assistance Dogs but they are expected to have received the appropriate training to avoid dog waste on campus. Assistance Dog owners must take responsibility for the clean-up of the animal's waste, consistent with reasonable capacity. Assistance Dog owners shall use reasonable endeavours to use the designated spending (toileting) areas identified by the University.

In the unlikely event that the Assistance Dog does spend outside of these designated areas, the Assistance Dog owner must report this to **the Estates Helpdesk** (estates.helpdesk@ed.ac.uk or 0131 650 2494 x 502494) who will make arrangements for the area to be cleaned and sanitised.

In order to support Assistance Dogs owners who are students or staff, the University will provide toileting facilities in an appropriate location for the Assistance Dog owner, as soon as is practical, once a need has been identified and communicated to the University.

Contact should be made with the University's Director of Estates Operations, Tommy Angus, via the Estates Helpdesk estates.helpdesk@ed.ac.uk.

H. Animal training

Assistance Dog owners are responsible for any additional training needs for their assistance dogs and for the correct and safe performance of their duties.

4. Therapy and Support Animals

Therapy and support animals are different to Assistance Dogs and there are no legal rights to bring them on campus. Requests to bring therapy or support dogs onto University premises may be considered as a request for a reasonable adjustment in line with other relevant policies. (Staff: [Reasonable Adjustment Policy](#) Students: [Disability and Learning Support Service](#))

5. Pets

This policy deals explicitly with Assistance Dogs, and not pets. A student shall only be permitted to bring their pet to University premises if separate policy (specific to such premises) allows this.



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6. Additional Issues

Removal of Assistance Dog

The University reserves the right to remove or bar entry to an Assistance Dog when it poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others. Unresolved animal misbehaviour may also provide grounds for removal, after all reasonable measures have been taken to address this. It should be noted that religious or cultural beliefs are not a valid basis for removal of an Assistance Dog or refusal of entry to an Assistance Dog.

Damage

Assistance Dog owners are responsible for any damage to persons or University property caused by their Assistance Dog.

Restricted access

The University may restrict access of Assistance Dogs to certain areas for health and safety reasons. Restricted areas may include research laboratories, medical facilities, areas where protective clothing is required, boiler rooms, etc. Applications for exceptions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Conflicting disabilities

Where an Assistance Dog poses adverse health risk to an/other person/people (student/s or staff), the University may ask for more information regarding the health risk and consider suitable alternative and equitable arrangements for either parties'.

Complaints

Any issues in relation to assistance dogs on University premises that cannot be resolved informally should be raised in accordance with the University's complaints handling procedure.

Further guidance

Disability and Learning Support Service: [Registration, Appointments and Queries](#)
Staff [Reasonable Adjustment Policy](#))

Health and Safety Department: [guidance for assistance and emotional support dogs on campus](#)

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