

# Pets and assistance animals policy

This policy is intended to clarify the University's position on any pets brought into the University accommodation for students living with us.

Animals are not allowed in the University's residential accommodation, with the exception of assistance animals and the exclusions mentioned elsewhere in this document. This is because of a variety of health and safety reasons, including but not limited to:

- Stalled or delayed evacuation of a building in an emergency situation
- Problematic or aggressive behaviour by animals
- Allergic reactions and transmission of disease
- Phobia of animals
- A dislike or wariness of animals by other campus accommodation users
- Slips, trips and falls
- Animal waste
- Damage to University property

The only exceptions to this policy are:

- Assistance animals
- Emotional Support animals in exceptional circumstances (and following agreement with the Residential Life team) within university owned accommodation. Cats are not allowed

## Assistance animals

The University outlines its commitment to this in the separate document [Assistance Animals on Campus](#), which also acknowledges the significant role that assistance animals play in supporting people with disabilities and their protection under the Equality Act of 2010.

Assistance animals, typically dogs, are an auxiliary aid trained to assist a person with disabilities performing 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 need to be able to undertake a minimum of three 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](#). 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 the opportunity to experience the working/learning environment. 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 accommodation by agreement, depending on context. Owners should contact AccessAbility 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. 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 (with the exception of cats) 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.

## AccessAbility

The [AccessAbility Centre](#) will:

- Signpost students 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 another 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.
- They engage in discussions about any issues such as fears or allergies.
- They note the information on requiring University accommodation and have an assistance animal in their accommodation application.
- They contact the Residence Life Manager in accommodation to undertake a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP), if required.

## Members of the University community

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

- Feed, pet or praise assistance animals
- Distract or startle an assistance animal
- Interfere with the assistance animal's service

## Complaints

### 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 to the [Accommodation Team](#), or through [Report and Support](#) and/or under the [Dignity and Respect at Leicester Policy](#).

### 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 [AccessAbility Centre](#) or the [Accommodation Team](#). 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 and 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. The assistance animal owner is also financially responsible for any damages caused by the assistance animal and appropriate charges will be assessed by the University to cover the costs of repairs and replacements.

## Accommodation applications

Students are expected to indicate in advance their need for an assistance or emotional support animal when requesting an accommodation at the University. This can be done in the notes section of the application on the [Accommodation Portal](#). We also require the student to advise the [AccessAbility Centre](#) of their requirement, so that an assessment can be carried out. Based on the needs of both the owner and the animal, a suitable location will be offered.

The student must be able to demonstrate appropriate proof for the pet's necessity, including a doctor's letter, alongside records of the animal's vaccines/health. Animals from tropical or exotic habitats are not permitted and do not qualify as emotional support animals.

While residing in the University-managed accommodation, the student is fully responsible for their animal at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, any inappropriate or dangerous behaviour, damage, noise, mess or smell caused by the animal in the accommodation, and any [damage/cleaning charges](#), disciplinary or legal action this may incur.