

Assistance Dogs and Emotional Support Animals

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Note: All policies must be read in conjunction with all other SOAS policy, procedure and guidance documents. Printed copies of policies may not be the most up to date, therefore please refer to the policy pages on the SOAS external website or intranet for the latest version.

1. Introduction / Purpose

- 1.1. This policy outlines SOAS's commitment to making reasonable adjustments for disabled individuals, as required under the Equality Act 2010. Assistance Dogs, as defined by this policy, form one of these adjustments, ensuring inclusivity and equal access for students, applicants, and staff members with disabilities.

2. Scope of Policy

- 2.1 This policy applies to:

- Students, applicants, and staff members requesting permission to have an Assistance Animal on campus or in Halls of Residence.
- Any SOAS-affiliated premises and accommodations.

3. Legal Framework

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, organisations must make reasonable adjustments for disabled individuals. Assistance Dogs are legally recognised as a valid adjustment for specific disabilities. Additional legal guidance is available through the Assistance Dogs UK website at <https://www.assistedogs.org.uk/the-law/>.

4. Eligibility Criteria

4.1 Disability Verification

- **Students and Applicants:** Must meet with a Disability Adviser to confirm their condition qualifies as a disability under the Equality Act 2010. This must take place before a student brings their Assistance Dog on to any SOAS premises.
- **Staff Members:** Must consult with an HR representative, either an HR Business Partner or a member of HR Recruitment. This must take place before a staff member brings their Assistance Dog on to campus.

4.2 Assistance Dog Definition

For an animal to qualify as an Assistance Dog, it must meet the following criteria, as per the Equality Act 2010:

- Trained to assist individuals with specific disabilities, such as blindness, deafness, epilepsy, mobility impairments, or other prescribed disabilities.
- Specifically trained to assist individuals with Mental Health disabilities by addressing specific difficulties.

4.3 Assistance Dog Characteristics

As outlined by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Assistance Dogs must:

- Be highly trained.
- Remain under control and not wander freely.
- Sit or lie quietly next to their owner.
- Be trained to go to the toilet on command to avoid fouling public spaces.

5. Verification Process

5.1 Recognised Training Standards

Assistance Dogs must be trained by organizations accredited by Assistance Dogs UK (ADUK) or Assistance Dogs International (ADI). Accredited organizations can be verified at:

- <https://www.assistedogs.org.uk/members/>
- https://assistedogsinternational.org/resources/member-search/#member_programs.

Documentation certifying training from an accredited organization is required for SOAS to recognise an animal as an Assistance Dog.

5.2 Emotional Support Animals

Emotional Support Animals are excluded from the definition of Assistance Dogs and do not hold the same legal rights. Therefore, they will not be considered under this policy.

6. Accommodation and Campus Access

6.1 Approval Process

SOAS will engage in discussions with the service user to assess the needs of the Assistance Dog and the service user, ensuring their requirements are met in a safe and practical manner.

6.2 Students

- Where accommodation is required, the Accommodation Team will endeavour to provide a suitable room within the accommodation portfolio or will assist in assessing alternative arrangements.
- The Estates Team will discuss on campus logistics with the service user and will ensure that appropriate arrangements are made.

6.3 Staff Members

- Human Resources and Estates will collaborate to identify appropriate office and working spaces.
- On campus provisions will be agreed in advance with the service user and any arrangements will be put in place.

7. Logistical Considerations

- 7.1 SOAS will address logistical considerations on a case-by-case basis to ensure the welfare of the Assistance Dog, the service user, and the wider SOAS community.

8. Responsibilities of Service Users

- 8.1 The Assistance Dog must remain with the service user at all times.
- 8.2 Service users must ensure the dog's needs are met without disrupting the campus environment.

9. Documentation Requirements

- 9.1 While there is no legal obligation to provide ID documentation for Assistance Dogs, SOAS requires documentation certifying the dog's completed training from an accredited organisation. This aligns with the process for submitting supportive documentation for other reasonable adjustments.

10. Policy Review

- 10.1 This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure compliance with legal requirements and alignment with best practices.