

**Assistance Dogs and Emotional Support Animals**

**Policy document**

Introduction

Loughborough University provides a range of well-established services to address the specific issues that disabled students, including those with mental health difficulties, may encounter during their time at the University in learning, teaching and the social environments.

The aim of this policy is to outline the University’s understanding, commitment and process for students who have Assistance Dogs (AD) and/or Emotional Support Animals (ESA)

Definition of ‘disability’

The University supports disabled students as defined under the Equality Act (2010)*:*

*‘A physical or mental impairment which has lasted or is likely to last for more than 12 months and which has a substantial and adverse effect on an individual’s ability to carry out day-to-day activities’*.

Educational activities would be classed as day-to-day activities, and long term means they are likely to last more than a year which would include conditions which are intermittent.  (Please note that there are several exceptions to this, for instance some mental health difficulties, and cancer, HIV and MS from the point of diagnosis are covered by the Act. Further information about definitions of disability can be found in the Government guidance [via this link](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-guidance/disability-equality-act-2010-guidance-on-matters-to-be-taken-into-account-in-determining-questions-relating-to-the-definition-of-disability-html)

Emotional Support Animals

Definition:

A companion animal that a medical professional says provides some benefit for someone with a mental health / emotional condition which substantially interferes with major life activities.

Registration:

ESA-UK provide an on-line registration system for anyone to use for their emotional support animal. ESA-UK note that ‘registration **may** help you take your Emotional Support Animal companion shopping, travelling and living with you, but access to any business is legally up to them as the health laws and regulations overrule any Emotional Support Animal companionship requirement to be with you, as they do not have the same legal rights as trained assistance animals or service animals in the UK.”

Assistance Dogs

Definition:

* Medical detection dogs / medical alert assistance dogs for people with life threatening health conditions. Dogs are trained to provide up to 50 minute warning prior to the onset of an epileptic seizure to allow a person to find safety and be in control over their seizure.
* Disability assistance dogs for people with physical disabilities. Their own pet dog is trained to perform tasks which are specifically tailored to their individual needs.
* Guide Dogs work with adults and young people who are blind or partially sighted and are a member of Assistance Dogs UK
* Hearing Dogs with work adults and older children who are Deaf or hard of hearing and are a member of Assistance Dogs UK

Registration:

Assistance Dogs UK is the umbrella organisation for certified assistance dogs.

Policy

The University welcomes assistance dogs onto campus to support disabled students in in line with the Equality Act (2010).

The University recognises the benefit emotional support animals can bring. However, as they are not provided by a recognised organisation and do not have an established training requirement before they are placed in a person’s home, they will be considered on a case-by-case basis, with prior written agreement of the University. The University will decide whether to accept an ESA by carefully considering relevant factors such as the health, safety and welfare of others (including the animal in question and other animals), living arrangements, academic environment requirements e.g., labs, adequacy of training, and the animal’s public liability insurance documents.

The University has the right to change its decision at any point if we have reason to believe the animal has become a hazard, or there are welfare concerns regarding the animal

Process

This policy should be shared with the applicant/student by the staff member who receives the initial enquiry. We recognise that a decision to refuse an ESA may be a difficult one for applicants and students to accept. Therefore, to try and make the process as supportive as possible, please consider the following questions before following the process as outlined below:

* Whether your animal is likely to be considered a dangerous, or a health and safety hazard in a communal living space.
* Whether it is legal to keep your animal, and whether you require a licence to do so. See government information about keeping wild animals, including birds[, by clicking here.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/keeping-wild-birds-or-animals)
* Whether you can maintain the welfare of the animal, e.g., regular dog walking, and whether it is appropriate to bring it with you onto campus, bearing in mind that you will have sole responsibility.
* The costs of caring for your animal, including vet's bills and food. If the University accepts the animal on campus, then you will remain solely liable for its care any associated expenses.
* Whether your animal is suitably trained so as not to cause a nuisance to others e.g., noise, odours.
* Whether your animal can be suitably housed/enclosed within in your room to maintain its welfare and not to cause a nuisance to others e.g., noise, odours. Breeding pairs will not be permitted.
* Can you provide evidence of Personal Liability Insurance, in your name, and for the animal concerned for a minimum of £2million. This cover is to include property damage, and if a person suffers injuries or death as a result of the animal.

If you feel, after considering these points, that you wish to make an application for your animal then please follow this process:

Applicants:

1. Complete the [Disability and Health Portal here](https://lucas.lboro.ac.uk/web_apx/f?p=144:101::::::) to share details of your situation with Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity (SWAI). This includes uploading diagnostic evidence in line with [University policy here](https://www.lboro.ac.uk/services/cds/students/swaievidencepolicy/) and confirming the animal type, the nature of its training and the plan for its local veterinary care.
2. Attach your Personal Liability Insurance certificate as outlined above.
3. Attach a letter from your health professional confirming your animal is required to provide essential support for your disability / long term health condition. This must be signed by them and provided on headed paper dated at least 3 months prior to your request.

Current students:

1. Email studentinclusion@lboro.ac.uk to share details of your situation with Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity. This includes sharing your diagnostic evidence in line with [University policy](https://www.lboro.ac.uk/services/cds/students/swaievidencepolicy/) and confirming the animal type, the nature of its training and the plan for its local veterinary care.
2. Attach your Personal Liability Insurance certificate as outlined above.
3. Attach a letter from your health professional confirming your animal is required to provide essential support for your disability / long term health condition. This must be signed by them and provided on headed paper dated at least 3 months prior to your request.

Applicants and students:

1. You will be allocated an Advisor from SWAI. They will share the details of your animal as above with University stakeholders e.g., Domestic and Residential Services Manager and the School Operation Manager.
2. Working in partnership with Health and Safety colleagues, stakeholders will undertake risk assessments in their respective areas. This may involve the applicant/student where further discussion/understanding is required.
3. Your SWAI Advisor will gather all the risk assessments and share with the Disability Access and Learning Manager and/or Student Wellbeing Manager.
4. The SWAI manager will meet with the Director of Health, Safety and Wellbeing to discuss the outcome of the risk assessments. The Director will email to confirm the outcome and next steps.
5. If approved, SWAI will update the support record which will advise colleagues in academic and professional services to expect an EMA.

Timescales

We recognise that a decision on whether the University can accept your ESA may impact on whether you chose to start / return to your studies.

1. SWAI will endeavour to process your Portal entry (for applicants) or email submission studentinclusion@lboro.ac.uk (for current students) within 14 working days. This will only be done at the point applicants hold a Firm or Insurance offer from the University.
2. The University will undertake risk assessments to be completed within 28 working days of point 2 above.
3. The University will reach a decision and Health and Safety will communicate the outcome to you within 14 days of point 3 above.

End of document.