

ASSISTANCE DOGS PROCEDURE

1. Introduction and scope

EKC Group values the diversity of its staff and students and is committed to providing a welcoming and supportive environment for all. This procedure provides information on the steps that the Group will take to facilitate the safe and effective hosting of Assistance Dogs, specifically:

- Definitions of what an Assistance Dog is and arrangements for accommodating a dog on EKC Group's premises
- Measures that the Group will take to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of the dog, the owner and other users of its premises
- Roles and responsibilities within the Group in relation to Assistance Dogs, including the responsibilities of owners
- Processes for dealing with complaints, should they arise

The procedure does not cover dogs which are used in animal care programmes or as part of a pre-arranged visit for specific purposes such as Police drugs detection dogs.

2. What is an Assistance Dog?

An Assistance Dog is a highly trained dog that is prepared and trained to carry out tasks and alerts to mitigate a person's disabilities or life-threatening health condition.

2.1 Examples of Assistance Dogs:

- Guide Dogs assist people who are blind or are visually impaired.
- Hearing Dogs assist people who are deaf or are hearing impaired.
- Support Dogs may also assist people with disabilities or medical conditions such as diabetes or epilepsy. Some highly trained Assistance Dogs can also alert someone with a psychiatric condition for example to take medication

3. Emotional support dogs (and animals).

Whilst an Assistance Dog is a highly trained dog that is prepared and trained to carry out tasks and alerts to mitigate a person's disabilities or life-threatening health condition. An emotional support dog or animal (sometimes also referred to as a therapy dog or animal), is a dog that offers comfort and companionship by being present, which requires no specialist training.

EKC Group does not accept an individual's emotional support animal on its sites. Emotional support animals are not referenced in law, as such the Group is not legally obliged to allow

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access to them in the same way that they are for a disabled person with a highly trained Assistance Dog.

4. Arrangements

The Group undertakes to put the following arrangements in place in order to allow staff, students and visitors with Assistance Dogs to enjoy the best possible experience:

- A risk assessment to ensure that
 - The owners and dog's needs are supported
 - The dog's presence does not jeopardise the safety of its owner and other users of the Group's premises.
- As part of the risk assessment EKC Group will require evidence from the dog owner that appropriate insurance is in place.
- Where a visitor brings an assistance dog onto site for a short visit e.g. an Open Day, a risk assessment will not be needed. However, the visitor will need to be briefed on the arrangements for toileting the dog and other aspects such as fire evacuation, the dog as a potential hazard (trips, health etc) and how to handle the dog in the case of encountering other individuals who may have phobias, allergies etc.

Reasonable adjustments will be put in place to accommodate Assistance Dogs which may include but are not limited to:

- Allocating a dedicated outside space or 'spending area' where the dog can relieve itself
- Educating staff and students as to the needs and rights of disabled students who rely on Assistance Dogs.
- Allowing students appropriate breaks to allow the Assistance Dog's needs to be met.
- Guidelines for staff and students on how to interact with Assistance Dogs. (This information can be found in Appendix 1 of this procedure).

5. Roles and responsibilities:

5.1 Estates

Estates staff will ensure the upkeep of the spending pen, and/or outside area, and that it is sufficient to ensure the health of the dog and the safety of the owner, including the provision of bins for dog refuse and the disposal of the refuse. In some circumstances, the owner will need to take their dog offsite to accommodate their toileting needs.

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5.2 Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team will

- assign an appropriate staff member (for example the relevant head of department) to carry out a risk assessment, obtain evidence of insurance and put in place any measures that are required to accommodate the Assistance Dog and its owner. (A risk assessment template can be found [here](#)).
- Ensure relevant communication and liaison occurs with staff e.g. Student Support Services, Line Manager etc. to ensure that all scenarios and possible risks are considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Ensure that students are signposted to this procedure to make them aware of the help provided by the Group and their rights and responsibilities.
- Ensure that any reasonable adjustments needed have been made.

5.3 Line Managers

Line Managers will ensure that staff with an Assistance Dog are aware of this procedure, including their own responsibilities and will work together with the member of staff to arrange any reasonable adjustments required. Line Managers will also ensure that other members of staff respond appropriately to the member of staff and the Assistance Dog. People Services will provide support to Line Managers in addressing any issues that arise.

5.4 The Owner

The Assistance Dog is the responsibility of its owner who must ensure that the Assistance Dog:

- Is highly trained
- Has appropriate liability insurance (and to provide evidence of this)
- Is kept on a lead at all times when walking around the Group's premises
- Uses the spending pen (or takes their dog off site) and does not allow it to foul the Group's premises.
- Has its requirements met in relation to toileting, feeding and general wellbeing.
- Behaves in an appropriate manner at all times and does not disrupt others.

In the unlikely event that the dog does foul inside one of the Group's buildings, the owner must report this to an appropriate member of staff to make arrangements with housekeeping to clean and sanitize the area. Dog owners are responsible for any damage to persons or Group property.

If an Assistance Dog is required for a student under the age of 16 a dedicated member of EKC Group staff will be assigned responsibility for supervising and meeting the needs of the dog. This is because it is not possible for someone under the age of 16 to be legally responsible for a dog in a public setting.

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6. Restricted access and refusal

The Group may restrict access to an Assistance Dog. Restricted areas may include laboratories, medical facilities, areas where protective clothing is required, boiler rooms, kitchens (where food is prepared for sale) etc. Applications for exceptions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

The Group reserves the right to refuse access to an Assistance Dog in circumstances where evidence is provided that a dog is unable to remain calm and well-behaved in public spaces.

7. Conflicting disabilities

Where an Assistance Dog poses an adverse health risk to an/other student/s or staff, the Group will seek medical documentation from the affected party/parties to determine suitable alternative and equitable arrangements for either or both parties.

8. Process for dealing with complaints and/or breaches of this procedure

8.1 Complaints by Assistance Dogs owners

If an individual with an Assistance Dog wishes to make a complaint about the treatment of themselves or their dog, they should firstly raise it informally with the department/area in question. Every attempt will be made to resolve the matter informally, including where appropriate the use of mediation.

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, students and members of the public may raise the matter formally via the Group's Complaints Policy.

Staff may escalate an issue via the Grievance Procedure.

8.2 Complaints about Assistance Dogs

If a student, a member of the public or staff wishes to make a complaint about an Assistance Dog or notices any breaches of this procedure, they should firstly raise it informally with the department/area in question. Again, every attempt will be made to resolve the matter informally with the dog's owner, including where appropriate the use of mediation.

If the matter cannot be resolved informally students and members of the public may raise the issue formally via the Group's Complaints Policy.

Staff may escalate an issue via the Grievance Procedure

8.3 Complaints about this procedure

Complaints about the operation of the procedure should be made using the procedures set out in the relevant staff or student complaints policy.

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9. Associated Policies, Procedure and Guidance:

- Assistance Dogs Risk Assessment Template
- Complaints Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Grievance Procedure

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Appendix 1 - Interacting with Assistance Dogs

When interacting with Assistance Dogs or with people who have Assistance Dogs, please bear the following points in mind:

- **Talk to the handler, not the dog!**

It is very frustrating for a person to have to interrupt your conversation with their dog. Likewise, if you are helping a person with a dog guide to get somewhere, give the person directions or talk with the person as they follow you. They will give the dog the correct commands for following you. Please do not call the dog. The dog is used to working for its owner. If it is responding to you, it is no longer focused on their needs but on you.

- **Do not pet or praise the dog without asking first, please!**

It can be very dangerous for the handler if their dog is distracted and not doing its job. It is important to remember that while they are extremely intelligent, devoted, and highly trained, Assistance Dogs are still capable of acting upon natural instincts and may display the same behaviours as other dogs from time to time. Assistance Dogs sometimes scavenge for food, get distracted by other animals, experience fear, and forget about their work when tempted by things they like. People's attention can be especially alluring. Praise is a reward for assistance animals, and people who work with the dogs provide it when it is appropriate. Sometimes it is given quietly in small doses; and at other times it is given lavishly. If another person says, "What a good dog," in passing, the person may have just rewarded the dog, without knowing it, for something the dog did just before the person arrived that was dangerous to the user. When admiring an Assistance Dog, it is best to keep eyes averted, comments directed to the user, and voice modulated appropriately (e.g. do not speak as if addressing a child or use an especially sweet-sounding voice, as this will draw the dog's attention).

- **Don't get angry at the handler if he or she does not want to stop to talk about their dog.**

Please keep in mind that they hear the same questions many times a day and often would just like to get home. Nice comments are always welcome, however!

- **Don't feed the Assistance Dog.**

Many – not all – service dogs are on strict, healthy diets to keep their working lives long, and they may also have allergies that you are not aware of. It also can break the dog's training if they learn that they get food in a public place

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