

Assistance dog policy

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Document control

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What is an assistance dog?

Assistance dogs are animals specially trained to perform specific defined tasks to help a disabled person. Guide dogs are the most common type of Assistance Dog, used by individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Other conditions that may require the use of Assistance Dogs include hearing loss, physical impairments, epilepsy or seizure-related disorders, autism spectrum conditions

Assistance dogs are expected to be highly trained which means they:

- will not wander freely around the premises
- will sit or lie quietly on the floor next to their owner
- have been trained to behave appropriately in public
- have safe and reliable temperaments
- are healthy and do not constitute a hygiene risk observed over a considerable period of time
- are fully toilet-trained
- are regularly checked by experienced veterinarians
- are accompanied by a handler who has been trained how to work alongside their assistance dog

Most are instantly recognisable by a harness or jacket. However, the law does not require the dog to wear a harness or jacket to identify it as an assistance dog.

Examples of assistance dogs (not an exhaustive list):

- Guide Dogs which assist a blind or visually impaired person
- Hearing Dogs which assist a D/deaf person
- Seizure alert Dogs which have been trained to assist a person who has epilepsy. These dogs are trained to behave differently when they detect a potential seizure, which may appear to be misbehaving.
- Service / Support Dogs which assist a disabled person with tasks such as practical tasks, raising the alarm, fetching items, calling an ambulance, operating control buttons.

Some, but not all assistance dog users, will carry an ID book giving information about the assistance dog and the training organisation together with other useful information. Assistance dogs can also be owner trained and the owner selects their own dog to fit their own requirements.

Under the Equalities Act 2010, assistance dogs are legally permitted to accompany its client, owner, or partner, at all times and in all places, within the United Kingdom.

The RVC are mindful of our responsibilities under the Equalities Act and assistance dogs are permitted on RVC grounds. However, because of the nature of much of the teaching, practice and training, most notably within in the clinical setting, rotations, EMS and placements, issues with the potential transmission of disease, cross contamination and broader health & safety concerns, this does mean that assistance

dogs can only be permitted access to certain parts of the campus. **Because of the above considerations and our responsibilities to the RVC population as a whole, assistance dogs cannot be permitted in any laboratory environment or any practical or clinical setting at this time.** Consideration will be given to alternative reasonable adjustments that will support the individual in these environments.

Assistance dogs may be permitted in the Clinical Skills Centre at the discretion of the Clinical Skills Centre Manager.

Considerations

Assistance dog owners:

- Must request permission from the RVC to bring assistance dogs onto campus **as far in advance** as possible of arrival on RVC premises but at least 12 weeks in advance.
- Must provide the following evidence as part of the application process:
 - a. A copy of the relevant certification/proof of training (where available).
 - b. Current vaccination certificates
 - c. Details of the veterinary practice the animal is registered with
 - d. Evidence of appropriate liability insurance. Assistance Dog owners are required to have in place valid public liability insurance which covers their personal legal liability in relation to potential risks such as; bodily injury to any third-party (person) and damage to property belonging to persons other than the owner.
- Will be required to liaise accordingly with the Advice Centre (students), Infrastructure services and the Corporate Health & Safety Team regarding their assistance dog.
- Must ensure that their assistance dog is clearly identifiable by the use of appropriate bibs, collars and/or harnesses when on duty so they are respected and not distracted.
- Ensure that their assistance dog is appropriately secured and restrained when not working.

Therapy dog/emotional support animals

Emotional support animals (including 'therapy dogs') do not currently have the same legal protection as assistance dogs. Assistance dogs have been trained to assist a person who has a 'disability' as defined by the Equality Act 2010, in effect acting as an 'auxiliary aid' for that person in assisting them to participate in daily living activities. Therapy dogs or emotional support animals provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, and certain phobias, but do not have special training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities. They are

not, under UK law, currently considered assistance animals. Evidence from a medical practitioner supporting the need for a therapeutic dog (or any other animal) does not mean that the dog is considered an assistance animal. A therapy dog does **not** have the same legal privileges as an assistance dog. **Therapy dogs/emotional support animals are not permitted to be kept on campus.**

Procedure for requests for assistance animals

Student requests for assistance animals must be made at the earliest possible opportunity by contacting disability@rvc.ac.uk.

The Disability Team will request further information as needed from the student and ask them to complete the Assistance Animal application form and provide relevant supporting documentation.

Once the application and supporting evidence is received the Disability Team, seeking advice from the Head of the Advice Centre and other relevant colleagues as necessary, will decide whether the request meets the criteria for assistance animals under this policy and associated Equality Act requirements

If the Disability Team is able to confirm that the request meets the criteria outlined in this policy it will be approved and they will ask the student to sign the Assistance Animal agreement. This ensures the RVC has confirmation that the student understands their responsibilities and agrees to abide by the considerations laid out in this policy.

Once the signed agreement is received the Disability Team will ensure the following:

- Accommodation, the academic department, Infrastructure Services and Health and Safety have been liaised with to ensure appropriate health and safety processes are in place including PEEPS or individual risk assessments as required.
- The student's academic department and Accommodation Services have been informed of any reasonable adjustments so that they can be considered and put in place.
- The Exams Team will be informed of any students who will need an assistance dog in exams and assessments.

If a request for an assistance animal does not meet the criteria outlined in this policy, the Disability Team will have to reject the application and advise the student of this decision. Consideration will be given to alternative reasonable adjustments that will support the student.

Students will also be expected to complete a Reasonable Adjustments Form with a member of the disability team which sets out all of the recommended reasonable adjustments that should be made for a student. The Reasonable Adjustment form is based on any medical evidence provided and subsequent discussion with the student about their support needs. This process will involve a discussion about alternative reasonable adjustments when a student is unable to have their assistance animal with them.

Because of the developing nature of policy regarding assistance animals in the UK, each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis in light of current legislation, policy and guidance.

Staff members should discuss their needs with their line manager and can also seek advice and support from Human Resources/Corporate Health and Safety and/or the EDI Unit.

Access Restrictions

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

Animal Misbehaviour

Preventing and correcting assistance dog's misbehaviour is the owner's responsibility. Owners must make sure that their assistance dogs do not cause harm or injury to others and damage to RVC property. The RVC reserves the right to remove or bar entry to an Assistance Dog when it poses a direct threat to the health & safety of others. Unresolved animal misbehaviour may also provide grounds for removal, after all reasonable measures have been taken to address this.

Animal welfare

The RVC reserves the right to remove access where there are concerns about the welfare of the animal.

Damage

Assistance Dog owners are responsible for any damage to persons or RVC property caused by the assistance dog.

Cleanliness

Registered blind people are not required to clean up after their guide dogs but they are expected to have received the appropriate training to avoid dog waste on campus. Assistance dog users share responsibility for the clean-up of the animal's waste, consistent with reasonable capacity. Owners must use the designated areas identified by the RVC. In the unlikely event that the dog does foul outside of these designated areas, the owner must report this to Estates who will arrange for the area to be cleaned and sanitised.

Animal Care and Supervision

It is the owner's responsibility to:

- To ensure regular health checks, vaccination and an adequate standard of grooming.
- Ensure the assistance dog has its requirements in relation to feeding, watering and toileting fully met.
- Ensure that the assistance dog is kept on a lead at all times when walking around RVC grounds or safely harnessed when unsupervised for short periods of time.
- Where it is noted that assistance dogs may be in poor health, excessively unclean or unkempt, the owner will be required to liaise with relevant staff.
- Failure to engage in improving the welfare of the dog may impact on access to RVC premises

Conflicting Disabilities

Where an Assistance Dog poses adverse health risk to other disabled student/s/staff, the RVC will liaise with both parties to determine suitable alternative arrangements where possible.

Religious or Cultural Conflicts

Religious or cultural beliefs cannot be used to prohibit access for Assistance Dogs and their owners. If a conflict arises we will take all reasonable steps to determine suitable arrangements for either or both parties.

Complaints

Any issues in relation to Assistance Dogs on RVC premises that cannot be resolved informally should be raised in accordance with RVC Complaints and Resolution procedures.

Advice to Members of the RVC Community

Assistance Dogs are highly trained working dogs, performing tasks to assist disabled persons. Members of the RVC community 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 animal's service.

Be aware that some assistance dogs are trained to behave differently when they detect a potential seizure and they can appear to be misbehaving (examples include excessive pawing or climbing on its owner).

Feedback

The RVC is happy to listen to the suggestions of Assistance Dog owners as to how provision for Assistance Dogs may be improved at the institution.

The above consideration refers to both students and staff but staff must have the agreement of their Head of Department.

Version and date:	V2 September 2024
Section responsible for policy maintenance and review:	Learning and Wellbeing
Contact:	Steve Short, Deputy Director of Learning and Wellbeing

Appendix 1 – Student application Form for Assistance Animal

Animal owner/handler must complete all information

Name of owner/handler:	
Contact Number:	
Student number (if applicable):	
Name of dog:	
Colour of dog:	
Breed of dog:	
Age and gender of dog:	
Name of registering organisation and registration number (if applicable)	
Training complete Y/N or further details	
Outline of any duties or tasks:	
Details of UK Veterinary Practice where your animal is registered	
Alternative emergency contact details e.g. if dog found and owner unavailable	

If your application is approved you will need to read and sign the Assistance Animal Agreement. If your assistance animal fails to conform to all the standards listed in the

Assistance Dog policy, it may not be allowed to attend any RVC Campus or access may be revoked.

Please return this form to disability@rvc.ac.uk along with the following information:

- A copy of your public liability insurance
- A copy of your current vaccination certificate(s)
- A copy of the relevant certification/proof of training (where available).
- Details of your microchip registration with a UK Government recognised database (see <https://www.gov.uk/get-your-dog-cat-microchipped>)

Appendix 2 - Assistance Animal Agreement

As the Handler/user of an assistance dog, I confirm that I have read the RVC Code of Conduct regarding dogs on campus and understood the following statements:

1. I have provided a copy of the animal's current vaccination and insurance certificates.
2. I understand that my animal must wear a lead, collar, cape or other appropriate visible identification, which identifies that the animal is an assistance animal.
3. My animal is trained, well groomed, odour free and not infected with external parasite (ticks, fleas or lice).
4. I understand that my animal must be on a lead at all times while on campus and additionally must be controlled by verbal commands.
5. I understand that I am responsible for the sanitary disposal of my animal's waste while on campus.
6. I understand that my animal will not be allowed in restricted areas as outlined in the Assistance Dog policy.
7. I understand that I am liable and responsible for my animal's behaviour and activities while on campus, including property damage.
8. I understand that I must follow all procedures and requirements for an animal user/owner as outlined in the Assistance Dog policy.

Handler/Users Name	
Handler/Users Signature	
Date	
University Approved Signature	
Position	
Department	
Date	

Please email this form to: disability@rvc.ac.uk