



# Oriel College

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

## ASSISTANCE DOGS POLICY

Version	Owner	Agreed by House Committee	Agreed by Governing Body	Reason for amendment	Amended by	Next review	Further notes
v.1	Domestic Bursar			This is the original version.		<b>October 2022</b>	
v. 2	Domestic Bursar	16 November 2022	MT 2022	Updated to include students	Governance Officer	<b>October 2025</b>	

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## A. Introduction

Thousands of disabled people rely on an assistance dog to help them with day to day activities that many people take for granted. Assistance dogs are trained to help people with blindness, hearing difficulties, epilepsy, diabetes, physical mobility problems, and other disabilities. Assistance dogs carry out a variety of practical tasks for people as well as supporting their independence and confidence.

### Legal Obligations

A disability is defined by the Equality Act 2010 as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability of the individual to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

It is unlawful to discriminate against a disabled person in the following ways:

- Direct discrimination (Treating a person less favourably than others because they are disabled or perceived to be disabled. For example, refusing to allow entry to disabled people, whether or not they have an assistance dog).
- Indirect discrimination (Where a particular policy disproportionately impacts disabled people compared to the non-disabled. For example, a "no dogs" policy will have a greater negative impact on disabled people using assistance dogs, and could be counted as indirect discrimination unless the policy can be objectively justified).
- Discrimination arising from disability (Treating an individual less favourably because of something relating to their disability. For example, refusing the same level of service to a disabled person because they have an assistance dog).

The Equality Act also recognises the following:

- Positive discrimination (The law recognises the particular disadvantages that disabled people face, and so treating disabled people more favourably is permitted).
- Reasonable Adjustments (where a physical feature, provision or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage, the College has a duty to take responsible steps to avoid that disadvantage. For example, it will often be reasonable to disapply a "no dogs" policy for assistance dogs owners).

## B. Information Security Classification

This policy represents part of the College's wider commitment to producing an inclusive and supportive working and learning environment, and demonstrates how it meets its legal obligations. Therefore, it will be available on the College website.

The policy will also be available internally via the College's policy SharePoint resource, and from the governance officer ([governance@oriel.ox.ac.uk](mailto:governance@oriel.ox.ac.uk)).

### C. Delegated Authority

The Head of HR and the Domestic Bursar are responsible for this policy. The Head of HR and Domestic Bursar are expected to work collaboratively to ensure that the staff and student body are aware on the College's policy on assistance dogs where appropriate, and their responsibilities under this policy.

The Domestic Bursar will be responsible for supporting the measures to aid students with assistance dogs, while the Head of HR will be responsible for overseeing arrangements for staff.

The Domestic Bursar will bring the policy for review to the House Committee at least once every two years, or in line with relevant regulatory changes (whichever is sooner).

### D. Policy Statement

This policy details College's approach to accommodating Assistance Dogs into the workplace and university environment. This policy is intended to support both staff and employees within the College Community.

This policy ensures that disabled people do not suffer any kind of discrimination while taking part in College life and day-to-day activities around College, satisfying the College's legal obligations outlined in **section A**, and realising College's commitment to promoting a continually inclusive and supportive environment.

### E. Definition of Terms

#### Assistance Dogs

An assistance dog is a dog that has been trained to assist a person with a specific disability and that has been accredited by one of the organisations registered as a member of Assistance Dogs (UK) or the International Guide Dog Federation. The registered organisations include:

- Guide Dogs
- Hearing Dogs for Deaf People
- Support Dogs
- Dogs for Good
- Canine Partners
- The Seeing Dogs Alliance
- Dog AID
- Medical Detection Dogs

Types of Assistance Dogs include:

- Guide dogs which assist people who are blind or visually impaired.
- Hearing dogs which assist people who are deaf or hearing impaired.
- Support dogs or dogs for the disabled. A support dog can be trained to do many tasks which their owner may find difficult or impossible.
- Seizure alert dogs for people with epilepsy.

Assistance Dogs trained by members of Assistance Dogs (UK) have formal identification tags and are allowed to accompany their owner at all times and in all places within the UK (unless there is a genuine health and safety risk).

On the grounds of health and safety responsibilities to staff, students and visitors, the University reserves the right to refuse access for a dog that is:

- Not qualified by one of the five membership organisations of Assistance Dogs (UK)
- From another nation which does not meet full membership criteria of the established international assistance dog organisations (Assistance Dogs International, Assistance Dogs Europe, International Guide Dog Federation).

Before bringing an assistance dog into the UK, you must ensure that the organisation you are registered with is accredited to Assistance Dogs (UK) which is a registered charity that welcomes applications for full membership from other charities that have been accredited by the Assistance Dogs International Guide Dogs Federation.

Assistance Dogs are not pets. They:

- Are highly trained.
- Will not wander freely around the premises.
- Will sit or lie quietly on the floor next to its owner.
- Are trained to go to the toilet on command and so are unlikely to foul in a public place.
- Are instantly recognisable by the harness or identifying coat they wear.

Assistance dog owners will have received full training on how to manage their animal. As the working life of an assistance dog is about six years, a dog owner could have several dogs during their lifetime.

## F. Procedure

### Allowing an Assistance Dog on College Premises

Under the Equality Act 2010, the admittance and accommodation of assistance dogs could be a reasonable adjustment for disabled employees and students. The College will give appropriate consideration to requests for dogs to be accommodated in the workplace or as part of student life in College.

The College will undertake an impartial and objective assessment if the suitability of an assistance dog to an employee or student's workplace, accommodation and day-to-day activities, seeking advice from assistance dog associations.

If the College agrees to the employee or student's request to accommodate an assistance dog, the College will make subsequent arrangements to enable the effective implementation and use of the assistance dog in the workplace or while on College premises.

### Assistance Dogs used by employees

This will include allowing the employee to have reasonable time off for training the assistance dog, taking the dog for veterinary checks and agreeing to

accommodate check-ups by the training association. Training for both employee and dog may well be provided by the assistance association and consideration will be given to supporting reasonable and proportionate leave requirements for this.

### Assistance Dogs used by students

For students who require the use of an assistance dog, the student's tutors and academic teachers will be made aware of the student's assistance requirements. Students are permitted to allocate time for the training of their dog, taking the dog for veterinary checks, and for receiving accredited training by the training association. However, students are encouraged to ensure that – wherever possible – these commitments are conducted outside of their contact hours.

Academic staff will however be sympathetic to the time constraints associated with these essential tasks, and the College welfare team will be able to effectively offer support to any student who is struggling.

For both students and employees, new dog owners will be allowed time to familiarise their dog with the workplace and College generally.

### Health and Safety procedures

A risk assessment will be conducted before the assistance dog accompanies the employee or student to work or study for the first time and regularly thereafter. This will be conducted by the line manager (for employees) or a member of the Lodge team (for students), in conjunction with the user of the assistance dog to cover assistance dog-related aspects.

This may include emergency evacuation procedures, dog toileting, and any health and safety or hygiene considerations pertinent to the workplace or areas of study and living.

Consideration may also be given to implications for any staff or students who will be located near the assistance dog, or who might encounter the assistance dog on a regular basis. Advice should be sought from HR (for staff) or the Domestic Office (for students).

### **Medical Emergencies**

Medical emergency planning will take place between the line manager and employee, and between the Senior Dean and the student. This will cover the procedures that should be followed if the employee or student falls ill while on College premises. In extreme medical emergencies, for example if the employee or student is rushed to hospital leaving the assistance dog in College, family, friends, or the assistance dog association may offer support. Contact numbers should be kept readily available in these situations.

### **Emergency Evacuation Procedures**

Emergency evacuation procedures will be established and practiced for the employee or student and assistance Dog, with any new or revised considerations built into personal emergency evacuation plans. This should cover scenarios where the employee or student is both with and without their assistance dog, and will lay down procedures for the safety of both employee or student and animal. Workplace and College communal space familiarisation for assistance dogs should include emergency evacuation routes. Any appointed fire marshals should be aware of the presence and needs of the assistance dog and its owner.

### **Toileting Requirements**

Toileting Requirements will be established in consultation with the employee or student. Toileting arrangements for employees may be on or off College premises. Toileting arrangements for students will be on College premises, but might not be in the student's accommodation. Safe and appropriate access routes to the toilet area should be wide enough to allow the dog and its owner to walk together to the area and meet accessibility standards.

Disposal facilities should also be clarified and agreements made regarding who will be responsible for each stage of the disposal.

### **Allergies**

If colleagues or fellow students interacting with the assistance dog have allergies or conditions (such as asthma) that may be affected by an assistance dog being nearby, local discussion should take place to find the best way to accommodate all needs.

Advice can be sought from assistance dog associations in conjunction with HR or the Domestic Bursary, should any difficulties be perceived in locating dog and colleagues near one another.

### **Religion and Belief**

If colleagues or fellow students in College raise objections on religious grounds to the presence of an assistance dog, these should be duly considered and managed locally.

It is unlikely that an objection on religious grounds will be sufficient justification not to approve an assistance dog request, in accordance with the justification defence set out in the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) states in its guide for business on assistance dogs that the Muslim Shariat Council has clarified that Muslim staff members should accept assistance dogs in businesses.

Should the need arise, further assistance should be sought from organisations such as the EHRC, in conjunction with assistance dog associations and HR or the Domestic Bursary.

## **G. Scope**

All College members are expected to comply with this policy. All staff and students who are uncomfortable with any of the measures set out in this policy should contact the HR department or Domestic Bursar as appropriate, as per **section I** of this policy.

College members should be aware that making reasonable provision for the use of a trained assistance dog for those who require one is a fulfilment of its legal obligations.

## **H. Training and Responsibilities**

The responsibilities of the employee or student, line manager or Senior Dean, and the employee's co-workers or the student's immediate peer group, should be

clarified before the assistance dog accompanies the employee to work. The following are outline responsibilities for each group.

#### **Dog Owners:**

- Ensuring that the assistance dog meets all standards for training, health, and grooming at all times (standards are set by the assistance dog association).
- Applying appropriate control, praise, and discipline to the dog as required, to maximise support and minimise any workplace disruption (such as excessive barking).
- Take steps to avoid the assistance dog causing damage to College property.
- Providing necessary equipment for the dog's wellbeing, for example a blanket or bed, water bowl, and toys.
- Ensure the assistance dog is not left unattended whilst in College.
- Ensuring that the dog is kept on its lead at all times while on university property.
- Exercising the dog away from university property.
- Managing spending breaks and water provision as required. The College does not provide outside exercise facilities and would require the lawn area of the Quads **NOT** to be used for spending (toileting) purposes.
- Being considerate of the needs of others in relation to the presence of the employee's assistance dog.
- Ensuring that, while working, the dog wears a jacket, harness, or tabard to indicate to the assistance dog and others that it is not working.

Dog owners should be aware that any damage caused by the dog will be charged to its owner.

#### **Fellow staff members and students**

- Taking instruction from the assistance dog owner in relation to contact with and approach to the animal (it is inappropriate to stroke, feed, or otherwise engage with the dog unless the owner has given permission).
- Addressing the owner of the dog rather than the dog itself, and limiting contact with, and distractions for, the animal.

#### **Line Manager (for employees) or Domestic Bursar (for students)**

- Providing a suitable and safe location for the assistance dog, close to the owner's workstation or accommodation if possible. The location should be draught-free, of suitable temperature and away from machinery, light or noise that may cause disruption to the dog.
- Facilitating toileting and other wellbeing breaks as required and generally providing a welcoming environment for the owner and their assistance dog.
- Providing or scheduling appropriate levels of time off for aspects such as dog training and veterinary visits, and accommodating visits from assistance dog associations.
- Communicating with all impacted staff and students ahead of the assistance dog's arrival, to help integrate the animal successfully and create an inclusive College environment for the dog's owner. Care should be taken to respect the owner's confidentiality needs, particularly if the disabilities or health conditions that the assistance dog supports are non-visible.



- Ensuring that colleagues and/or fellow students continue to fulfil their responsibilities.

## I. Internal Help and Raising Concerns

Any staff or students who feel that their disability needs have not been appropriately met by this policy, or that this policy has not been sufficiently implemented, are invited to address their concerns to the HR department or the Domestic Bursary as appropriate.

Any College member who is unsatisfied with the provisions put in place to accommodate a trained assistance dog are welcome to share their concerns with the HR department or Domestic Bursary as appropriate, bearing in mind that allergies or religious objections are not usually sufficient justifications to refuse an assistance dog request.

## J. Consequences of Non-Observance

Any owner of an assistance dog who does not abide by the stipulations of this policy will be reminded of their responsibilities under this policy in the first instance. Repeat violations will lead to a grace period for the assistance dog owner to make alternative arrangements.

Any College member who is found to be violating their responsibilities under this policy, contrary to the wishes of an assistance dog owner, will be reminded of their responsibilities in the first instance. Repeat offence will lead to disciplinary action from the Senior Dean or HR department as appropriate, including relocating a student or staff member's workspace or accommodation.

## K. Further Help

Students should direct their concerns to the Domestic Bursary.

Staff members should direct their concerns to the HR department.

## L. Reference

This policy should be read in conjunction with the College's Equal Opportunities Policy and Code of Conduct and Anti-Harassment policy.