Assistance Animals Procedure

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) Charles Darwin University ('the University', 'CDU') seeks to provide an inclusive, supportive environment for all students and employees. Assistance animals are an increasing part of therapy, treatment and support for people with a range of physical and mental disabilities and conditions.

Section 2 - Purpose

(2) This procedure provides a framework for the University to support students or employees who have an assistance animal for support or as part of ongoing treatment or therapy.

(3) This procedure also supports the University's legal requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), the Anti-Discrimination Act 1992 (NT) and associated legislation and regulations.

(4) This procedure should be read in conjunction with the Animals on Campus Policy.

Section 3 - Scope

(5) This procedure applies to all students, employees, and visitors with an assistance animal, including honorary or adjuncts with an office on campus, and to all employees responsible for managing or accommodating these students and employees.

(6) This procedure also applies more generally to all employees, students, visitors and other members of the University community who may come into contact with people requiring registered assistance animals.

Section 4 - Procedure

(7) Assistance animals are recognised as an essential part of support, therapy and assistance for people with a wide and increasing variety of physical and mental disabilities and conditions. Assistance animals are generally dogs, although under exceptional circumstances other animals may be recognised as assistance animals.

(8) Conditions that may be supported by an assistance animal include but are not limited to:

a. hearing or vision impairment;
b. physical mobility impairment;
c. episodic medical conditions such as epilepsy or diabetes; or
d. psychiatric disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder or anxiety.

(9) Assistance animals are not considered pets but are highly trained disability support services that enable a person with a disability to safely participate in personal and public life activities. The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 defines an assistance animal as a dog or other animal that is:

a. accredited under a state or territory law to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effects of disability;
b. accredited by an animal training organisation; or
c. trained:
    i. to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; and
    ii. to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.

(10) Although the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 provides a general legislative framework for Australia, most states have their own system of accrediting or licencing assistance animals. The Northern Territory does not have a system of accreditation beyond that provided by various non-government organisations.

(11) Animal welfare on campus is the responsibility of the University's Animal Welfare Officer. Concerns regarding the welfare of assistance animals should be reported to the Animal Welfare Officer as soon as reasonably practical.

(12) Owners of assistance animals are responsible for the welfare of their own animal.

Assistance animal approval

(13) Students and employees seeking to bring an assistance animal to University grounds for study or work must seek approval from their lecturer or senior manager, respecively, and notify the Animal Welfare Officer. Additional guidance can be sought from Work Health and Safety.

(14) Visitors who attend University premises from time to time on an irregular basis do not require approval to bring an assistance animals. Visitors bringing assistance animals on campus must follow reasonable direction from University employees and ensure the animal is under effective control at all times.

(15) To be approved as an assistance animal, the animal must:

a. be trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate or assist with the effects of the disability;
b. meet standards of hygiene and behaviour appropriate for a public place, including toilet training and the ability to stay calm in professional and social situations; and
c. have some form of immediately recognisable identification as an assistance animal while working.

(16) An animal may be recognised as a trained assistance animal under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 if it has received sufficient training to assist with or alleviate the effects of a disability, regardless of who has provided that training. This may include:

a. an accredited organisation, such as Guide Dogs Australia; or
b. a professional animal trainer independent of a specific assistance animal training organisation.

(17) In addition to training directly relevant to the disability of the owner and ability to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour suitable for public places and the workplace, the animal must be able to remain calm in workplaces or study environments. The animal must be under effective control at all times.

(18) Assistance animals must be sufficiently trained to behave as a working animal and not as a pet when working. The animal should refrain from initiating interaction with other humans or animals while working, unless this is a part of their role (for example, alerting other people that their owner is in distress).

(19) To confirm that an assistance animal is appropriate to support the needs of its owner, the University may request evidence of the animal’s training or medical necessity. Any refusal to provide requested evidence may result in approval not being granted.

(20) Evidence may include:

a. confirmation of training by a recognised training organisation, such as Guide Dogs Australia;
b. confirmation of training by a professional animal trainer;
c. evidence of support for training through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS);
d. a demonstration of the training and skills of the animals, if appropriate and safe; or
e. a certificate from a GP or other appropriate medical practitioner confirming that the animal is a necessity to support the owner.

(21) The University may decide that written evidence is unnecessary in circumstances where the training of the animal is clearly apparent, such as when the animal in question is a guide dog.

(22) If the animal is unable to meet these training and behavioural requirements or if insufficient evidence is provided to support that the animal is required or appropriately trained, Work Health and Safety and the Animal Welfare Officer may refuse to approve the animal.

(23) The relevant manager will consult with the immediate work area and key contacts to manage allergies or fear of animals.

Review of decision not to approve assistance animal

(24) If the University does not approve the assistance animal for any reason, the owner may request a review of the decision by the Director People and Culture. The Director People and Culture may seek further advice, including medical experts and people with expertise in animal training.

(25) If the review upholds the refusal to approve and the owner wishes to further contest the matter, they may lodge a formal complaint with the Northern Territory Disability Discrimination Commissioner.

Expectations on owners

(26) Assistance animals must wear some form of identification when working, such as jacket identifying the animal as an assistance animal or a harness appropriate for a guide dog.

(27) All assistance animals must have up to date routine parasite prevention (to avoid fleas and ticks in the workplace) to the satisfaction of the Animal Welfare Officer.

(28) The owner of the assistance animal must provide for the needs and comfort of the animal in the workplace. This includes toilet breaks, exercise, and access to food and water. The animal may also have other particular requirements, such as a designated relaxation area, a rug or basket or toys.

(29) If the assistance animal has been approved, the employee’s manager in conjunction with Work Health and Safety will assist the owner and the working area or teaching employees with ensuring that appropriate accommodations are made for the owner and animal. Work Health and Safety will also ensure that the presence of the assistance animal is included when developing a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP).

Expectations on University employees and students

(30) Employees and students must respect that an assistance animal is a working animal and part of a disability service rather than a pet. Anybody other than the owner must not pat, play with, feed or otherwise interact with the animal without the express permission of the owner.

(31) Employees and managers are expected to make reasonable allowance for assistance animals, such as ensuring that there is sufficient space for the animal to rest or allowing the owner time to take the animal outside for toilet breaks or exercise.

Disputes regarding assistance animals

(32) Disputes regarding assistance animals may arise for a range of reasons, including but not limited to:

a. psychological distress caused by the presence of the animal (for example, a phobia regarding dogs);
b. cultural issues around animals, such as beliefs around cleanliness or attitudes towards animals;
c. allergies or other medical issues with animals;
d. allegations that the animal is not behaving or properly trained for the work or study environment; and
e. allegations that employees or students are interacting improperly with the animal, such as repeatedly attempting to pat or play with the animal without the express permission of the owner.

(33) If a dispute regarding an assistance animal arises between the owner and another student or employee, they must first attempt to resolve the matter in a respectful and mutually beneficial way in consultation with their Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor or line manager, as applicable.

(34) If the matter cannot be resolved between the parties at the local level, Work Health and Safety can assist to negotiate with and determine a reasonable accommodation for the parties, such as:

a. ensuring that the animal is kept distant from the affected person at all times;
b. ensuring that the owner of the animal and the other party are not assigned to the same work or study teams;
c. providing separate and appropriate workspaces for the parties;
d. disability awareness training regarding assistance animals; or
e. any other accommodation or action that Work Health and Safety determines is reasonable and appropriate.

(35) As far as reasonable, the University will seek to ensure that these accommodations are mutually beneficial for all parties.

Section 5 - Non-Compliance

(36) Non-compliance with Governance Documents is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct - Employees or the Code of Conduct - Students, as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures outlined in the Charles Darwin University and Union Enterprise Agreement 2025 and the Code of Conduct - Students.

(37) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the Complaints and Grievance Policy and Procedure - Employees and Complaints Policy - Students.

(38) All employees have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or corruption in accordance with the Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Whistleblower Reporting (Improper Conduct) Procedure.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	6th December 2024
Review Date	6th December 2027
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor
Approval Date	6th December 2024
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Fiona Coulson Vice-Chancellor
Implementation Officer	Peta Preo Director People and Culture
Enquiries Contact	Peta Preo Director People and Culture

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Animal" - A live, non-human organism in a category defined as an animal by the Animal Protection Act 2018 (NT) or the Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 8th Edition 2013.

"University" - Charles Darwin University, a body corporate established under section 4 of the Charles Darwin University Act 2003. The University is comprised of the various faculties, CDU TAFE, organisational units, and formal committees, including the governing University Council and Academic Board.

"Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)" - Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) is a plan designed for any occupant who requires assistance during an emergency, e.g. mobility or visually impaired.