

Emotional Support Animal

Policy & Procedures

This document provides information and procedures for Students wishing to keep an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) on the Acadia University campus and is meant to be considered in conjunction with the Residence Contract and does not invalidate any other policies, procedures, or considerations. All procedures outlined herein comply with [Bill No 59, An Act Respecting Accessibility in Nova Scotia](#).

Acadia University acknowledges that ESAs represent a unique addition to the Residence Community. As such, there are additional responsibilities as part of having an ESA permitted in campus housing. As outlined in this document, the Owner is considered solely responsible for their ESA and may be held liable, financially, or otherwise, for any action or behaviour that impacts Acadia property or community. Failure to abide by the expectations and responsibilities outlined in this document may result in immediate removal of the animal and/or may be reviewed through the university's judicial process.

It is important to note that Service Animals, as described in the definition section, provide a different service than Emotional Support Animals and are provincially and federally regulated. In Nova Scotia Service Animals are protected under the [Human Rights Act](#), [Service Dog Act](#), and [Nova Scotia's Blind Persons' Rights Act](#). As such, Acadia University has a legal requirement to allow complete access to Service Animals and they are therefore exempt from this document.

Should you have any questions about having a Service Animal on campus please contact Accessible Learning Services directly at accessible.learning@acadiau.ca.

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SECTION 1: DEFINITIONS

- a. **Emotional Support Animal (ESA):** An “Emotional Support Animal” is an animal that provides comfort to a person with a disability upon the recommendation of mental health professional. The comfort from an Emotional Support Animal serves to alleviate one or more identified symptoms or effects of a resident’s documented disability. Unlike a Service Animal, an Emotional Support Animal does not assist a resident with a disability with activities of daily living, nor does it accompany the resident at all times.
- b. **Service Animals:** Service animals are specially trained to assist individuals with disabilities with everyday activities and may accompany that person during all daily activities. In Nova Scotia these animals may be certified through the Service Dog Act.
- c. **Approved Animal:** An ‘approved animal’ is an Emotional Support Animal that has been granted as a reasonable accommodation by Accessible Learning Services as outlined through this document. Once approved, the animal is referred to as an ESA.
- d. **Owner:** The individual student who has requested the ESA and been approved as an accommodation through Accessible Learning Services.
- e. **Disability:** As per [Bill No 59, An Act Respecting Accessibility in Nova Scotia](#), ‘disability’ includes a physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual’s full and effective participation in society (2017, 3.1.i, p.2).
- f. **Barrier:** Anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of persons with disabilities. This includes a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, and/or a policy or a practice (2017, 3.1.c, p. 2).

SECTION 2: ESA APPLICATION PROCESS

Requests for ESAs will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. If the ESA is approved, it shall be for one academic year and will need to be approved annually. Only one (1) ESA may be approved at a time for an individual student.

All requests for accommodation should be made as early as possible. Students requesting to have an ESA in campus housing should submit their request and supporting documentation to Accessible Learning Services at least four (4) weeks before the anticipated move-in date of their ESA. This allows enough time to review the request and provide students notice of the decision made on their application. While applications may receive a decision well in advance of the deadline, Acadia University cannot guarantee approved ESAs would be able move in prior to their anticipated move-in date.

To begin the application process, students may contact Accessible Learning Services at accessible.learning@acadiau.ca. They will then be provided with a summary of the application process and application package.



The ESA application consists of the following:

- (i) ESA Application_Medical Documentation
- (ii) ESA Application_Release of Information
- (iii) ESA Application_Student Responsibilities
- (iv) Health/Veterinary Documentation (*See Section 3b*)

Once an application has been received, a designated member of the Accessible Learning Services Team will review the completed application and communicate the results. Should the ESA be approved, the Owner will meet with Accessible Learning Services to review the expectations and answer any additional questions the student may have. At any point during this process students may contact Accessible Learning for clarification or assistance.

In order to maintain approved status, veterinary records must be kept up to date. As such, the Owner will regularly submit updated veterinary information to Accessible Learning Services. At minimum, this will occur on an annual basis.

Accessible Learning Services will communicate directly with Residence Life regarding approved ESAs. At which point Residence Life staff will contact the student to discuss any housing or room related needs. Residence Life staff will also notify other affected departments as necessary (such as Safety & Security and Physical Plant) in order to safely and comfortably house the owner and ESA.

In addition, students living in the same floor or area of residence as the ESA will be notified of its presence and species. This is to ensure that students with allergies or phobias will have the opportunity to discuss their concerns with Residence Life and request to move to an alternative space in Residence. At no point will the Owner's personal information be disclosed to the students residing in their area. Should the Owner have assigned roommates Residence Life will discuss appropriate housing options to accommodate them. In the event the Owner remains in a housing style with roommates, all roommates will be contacted before the ESA's move in date to discuss expectations, questions, and be given the opportunity to request a room switch.

SECTION 3: APPROVAL & DOCUMENTATION

In order to be considered for approval, there must be a demonstrated link between the animal and documented disability as defined by [An Act Respecting Accessibility in Nova Scotia](#) (Section 1a).

The animal must be non-venomous and housed in a species appropriate enclosure. Additional restrictions regarding the type of animal permitted under this policy may be added at the discretion of the University. In addition, the animal's standard habitat and care requirements will taken into consideration. Alterations to the animal's recommended or standard environment cannot be factored into the decision-making process.

Animals that require the following cannot to be considered:

- i. Heating elements of any kind;
- ii. Large fish tanks;
- iii. Live feeders (including insects)



a. Medical Documentation

Documentation must be completed by a physician, clinical psychologist, social worker, counselling therapist, or psychiatrist, using the Acadia University ESA Application form.

- i. Emotional distress resulting from having to give up an animal because of a 'no pets policy' does not qualify a person for an accommodation under this Procedure.
- ii. Self-certification through online programs or through a dog trainer does not qualify a person for an accommodation under this policy.

b. Health/Veterinary Documentation

Animals to be housed in campus housing must have an annual clean bill of health from a licensed veterinarian. Prior to being approved, applicants must provide documentation of the following:

- i. Proof of up to date species appropriate vaccination records. Including rabies & distemper and treatment records for flea, tick, & worm control;
- ii. Proof of spay or neuter;
- iii. Any medication the animal is on, the reason for taking these medications, and potential side effects the animal may experience;
- iv. A description of the animal's temperament and how they interact with others;
- v. A description of special care the animal may need (including regarding its limited environment [residence room]);

Specific to Dogs:

- vi. That the animal is housebroken, has received basic training;
- vii. Proof of registration and licensure as abiding with the Municipality of the County of Kings BY-LAW #71A DOG BY-LAW.

b. Change in ESA

Each application is animal-specific and cannot be considered for an animal other than the original one listed on the forms. Approval of a particular animal does not guarantee that a student can have a different animal. If the student wishes to designate a different animal as their ESA a new application must be completed and approved in advance of the new animal relocating to campus.

Failure to follow this process may result in the approved animal's ESA status being revoked and not permitted on campus.

c. Appeals or Reconsideration

If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of their request and/or has new information or concerns, the student will have the opportunity to request reconsideration.

SECTION 4: GUIDELINES & RESPONSIBILITIES

All ESAs must be registered with Accessible Learning Services. An exemption to the 'no animals in residence' regulation does not constitute an exception to any other regulation and/or policy. It is expected that the Owner will make all efforts to appropriately care for their ESA and will abide by all



applicable policies or regulations. The following information provides additional guidelines regarding the Owner's responsibilities.

a. Registration

- i. The ESA must have tags or another method indicating ownership and health clearances consistent with municipal bylaws.

b. Approved Spaces

- i. ESAs are only permitted in the Owner's university residence room.
- ii. ESAs are permitted to use common hallways to travel between the Owner's room and the exterior spaces. It is expected that all travel to/from the Owner's room will use the most direct route.
- iii. Furniture cannot be removed from residence rooms to accommodate ESAs.

Please note: ESAs are not permitted in in other campus buildings, student rooms, or other communal residence spaces. This includes, but is not limited to; recreation facilities, classrooms, offices, dining facilities or kitchens, washrooms, and/or lounges.

c. Behaviour & Supervision

- i. The owner is solely responsible for the supervision, care, and maintenance of the ESA and must be under the control of Owner at all times.
- ii. ESAs may not be left unattended overnight. Should the Owner leave campus for a prolonged period the ESA must be taken with them. At no point may the owner leave the ESA to be cared for by another student.
- iii. When the student is out of their residence room (e.g. for class, meals, etc.), the ESA will be left in a enclosed environment (student's room, kennel, or other confined, species appropriate environment.
- iv. Behaviour that can be considered disruptive, inappropriate, a safety hazard, or otherwise negatively impact the health and wellbeing of others may result in the ESA being required to leave campus.
- v. In order to be approved to return it must be demonstrated that the ESA's behaviour has been addressed appropriately and the behaviour is unlikely to reoccur.

d. Cleanliness & Waste Disposal

- i. The Owner is responsible for the proper clean up and disposal of waste and/or other messes created by the ESA; including those in the ESA's designated relief area.
- ii. The animal's waste (including litter) must be removed by placing the waste in a closed bag or container and depositing it in the designated waste receptacle for the Owner's building. At no time may waste be disposed of in the shared garbage in kitchens, lounges, or bathrooms.
- iii. Housing facilities and bathrooms cannot be used for animal bathing and grooming.
- iv. The Owner's residence may have pest inspections scheduled as determined by Residence Life.

e. Animal Health & Wellness



- i. The animal must be clean and in good health. This includes species appropriate grooming and flea, tick, and odour control.
- ii. Animals must have an annual check-up with a licensed veterinarian and be current with species-appropriate vaccinations.
- iii. Proof of vaccinations must be filed with Accessible Learning Services for each approved year.
- iv. A sick animal must be ethically removed from the university facilities within 24 hours. Residence Life reserves the right to ask for health verification upon return of the animal.

f. Housing & Room Location

Room placement is based on availability and will be managed by Residence Life. While Residence Life will make reasonable effort to provide housing that takes the student and ESA's needs into account, approval of an ESA does not guarantee that the student will receive a particular room type. In addition,

- i. The Owner may be required to live in a single occupancy space
- ii. The Owner and ESA may be relocated at the discretion of Residence Life

g. Damages and Liability

The student is financially and legally responsible for the actions of the animal including, but not limited to; cleaning, bodily injury or damages. As such, any cost incurred by the university related to the ESA is the responsibility of the Owner.

If fleas, ticks or other pests are detected through inspection, treatment will be arranged by the university using approved fumigation methods. The Owner will be responsible for any expense above and beyond standard pest management in the residence halls.

h. ESA Required to Leave

An ESA may be asked to leave the Owner fails to abide by any ESA policies or procedures including those outlined in the ESA Student Responsibilities document. Reasons the ESA may be required to leave, include, but are not limited to:

- i. neglect or mistreatment;
- ii. illness;
- iii. presence in unapproved areas;
- iv. any actions or behaviour that may place the animal at risk;
- v. any actions or behaviour that may negatively impact or otherwise place students, staff, faculty or members of the Acadia community at risk;
- vi. any actions or behaviour that causes damage to property or belongings;
- vii. the Owner violates University policy.

i. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Significant allergies to animal dander and other concerns of this nature will be addressed on a case-by-case basis and will be collaboratively managed between Accessible Learning Services and Residence Life.



SECTION 5: CONFIDENTIALITY

Accessible Learning Services maintains records for seven (7) years, after which they will be destroyed appropriately. A student's diagnosis and medical/health information is considered confidential and will not be disclosed to Residence Life staff when relaying information regarding approved ESAs.

Any information shared regarding an Owner or ESA will only be what is necessary to ensure continuation of services. This may include discrete signage on the door notifying staff that an animal is inside. In the event of an approved ESA, Residence Life staff will notify other students living in the floor/area of the species of the animal but will not provide identifying information of the student.

In the unusual event that an Owner has roommates Residence Life will contact them individually to notify them of the ESA. Should any roommate wish to decline living in a shared room with an ESA they will be given the opportunity to move to another space.

In the event of suspected neglect or mistreatment the SPCA or other animal welfare body may be contacted.

