



RCSI

RCSI Service Dogs on Campus Policy

This policy details RCSI's approach towards Service Dogs on campus. This policy applies to all staff, students, visitors, and contractors and to all University campuses, buildings, grounds, and RCSI owned residences.

Purpose

RCSI is fully supportive of all persons bringing approved Service Dogs, in the company of their registered owner, into the University areas to which their owner normally has authorised access. The University recognises that Service Dogs are highly trained working dogs who pose a minimal disruption to university activities.

A Service Dog Definition

A Service dog is a working animal trained to assist persons with a disability, whether visible or hidden. For a dog to be recognised by the University as a Service Dog it must be fully trained and registered with one of the following or an international equivalent:

- Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind,
- Dogs for the Disabled,
- Autism Assistance Dogs Ireland.
- International Guide Dog Federation
- Dogs For the Disabled (Cork)
- My Canine Companion
- Canine Partners (UK)
- Dog A.I.D. (UK)
- Guide Dogs UK
- Hearing Dogs for Deaf People (UK)
- Medical Detection Dogs (UK)
- Support Dogs (UK)

Examples of Service dogs include

- Guide Dogs
- Hearing Dogs for Deaf People
- Mobility Assistance Dogs
- Medic Alert/ Medical Detection Dogs
- Autism Assistance Dogs

Members of the wider University community are reminded that Service Dogs are working dogs and not pets and should not be disturbed when at work. In addition, an increasing variety of dog breeds can be used as Service Dogs and no assumptions should be made about an animal's status based on its breed.

Requirements

Service Dog owners must engage with the University before starting their course or employment to discuss their individual needs and ensure that any necessary support can be made fully available to them and their service dog. Additionally, existing students or staff that require a service dog after joining the University, should promptly inform the relevant department below to arrange the necessary support.

The University will request appropriate documentary evidence that demonstrates that the dog meets the above criteria and is necessary to meet their personal needs. For more information email the relevant departments below, quoting Service Dog:

- **Student process:** please email learningsupport@rcsi.ie
- **Staff process:** please email hrqueries@rcsi.ie

The University will normally assume that a Service Dog, wearing an appropriate service animal harness or a branded lead clearly stating that it is a working Service Dog, is indeed an approved service animal. However, if any query arises regarding a service animal a Senior Estate and Support Services Manager, in conjunction with relevant Senior Manager from COMPPAS (pertaining to students) or Human Resources (pertaining to staff), following engagement with the animal owner, will have the final decision as to whether a specific animal meets the definition of a Service Animal.

Service Dogs are allowed on university subject to the following conditions:

- The service dog must always be under supervision and control of the owner.
- The service dog should be wearing a suitable identifying safety harness or identification vest when on campus.
- The service dog is expected to behave appropriately and not cause any disruption to the normal functionality of the area of attendance – i.e., that during lectures or in an office environment the service animal is expected not to cause any disruption via barking, excess movement or wandering in the venue.
- Owners are responsible for ensuring that their service dog has appropriate access to water, food, and rest breaks during the day. Owners must promptly clean up and dispose of solid waste using their own waste bags, in the appropriate external disposal bins provided for this purpose.

The University advises that there may be necessary restrictions to this policy under the University's obligation to ensure compliance with applicable Safety, Health, and Welfare legislation and to protect the Service Dog thus some locations on campus may pose increased and unacceptable risk to the animal. e.g., teaching labs with chemicals.

In addition, the University may need to assess and balance the requirements of other students or staff who may have allergies or other concerns / phobias regarding Dogs. In the unlikely event of the need for such an assessment this will be undertaken by a Senior Estate and Support Services Manager, in conjunction with relevant Senior Manager from COMPPAS (pertaining to students) or Human Resources (pertaining to staff).



Emotional Support Animal / Comfort Animal

The terms 'emotional support animal' and 'comfort' animal are not recognised under current Irish legislation, and do not meet the criteria to be classified as a Service Dog.

While emotional support animals are not recognised under current Irish legislation and are not permitted on RCSI campuses, several alternative support options are available for those who rely on them. The university has a dedicated CoMPPAS office designed to help students navigate their academic and personal challenges effectively. RCSI also provides designated quiet spaces and relaxation rooms where students can unwind and practice mindfulness techniques, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. Further support includes access to RCSI's Employee Assistance Programme Spectrum Life, which offers confidential counselling and information service for all staff.

Policy exclusions:

This Policy does not apply to:

- Hospital Partners and third-party clinical sites – these entities have their own service dog policies which historically only permit service dogs to enter inpatient rooms and public areas. These exclusions may impact a student's ability to accept an offer of a place in RCSI, especially if their course requires completion of clinical placements. In these circumstances RCSI Learning Support and other assigned persons will meet with the student in advance to discuss their options.
- Animals (including birds) associated with specific University events or activities, subject to the event or activity being approved in advance by Health and Safety and the Estate and Support Services dept.
- Animals used in the course of duty by Gardaí or other members of the emergency services.
- There may be other exceptions as decided by the University as deemed necessary.

Getting Further Help

The COMPPAS team and the Human Resources department are available to support any student or staff in understanding or implementing the content of this policy and procedure.

Policy Review

The Human Resources Department will ensure that this policy will be monitored and kept under review.