Emotional Support Animal Policy

The College of Wooster (COW) recognizes the importance of “Service Animals” as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) and the broader category of “Emotional Support Animals” under the Fair Housing Act (FHA) that provides physical and/or emotional support to individuals with disabilities.

The following policy explains the specific requirements applicable to an individual’s use of an Emotional Support Animal in housing. The College of Wooster reserves the right to amend this Policy at any time. This policy applies solely to “Emotional Support Animals” for campus living. It does not apply to “service animals” as defined by the ADAAA.

The College of Wooster is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to qualified students with disabilities to provide students with an equal opportunity to use and enjoy college housing. Students with disabilities who require the use of an Emotional Support Animal as a reasonable accommodation may be permitted to bring such animals on campus provided that they comply with the college’s policies regarding such animals. Students who seek to bring an animal to campus must first contact the Learning Center (330-265-2595), the office which coordinates disability accommodations for the College of Wooster.
**Definitions**

*Emotional Support Animal*

An Emotional Support Animal (ESA) is covered under the FHA as an animal who provides support, affection, companionship, etc. to a person with a diagnosed mental health disability. These animals are chosen specifically as an integral part of a student’s treatment plan to help alleviate one or more symptoms of a student’s disability. An emotional support animal provides an individual with a mental health disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy college housing. The animal does not perform work or a specific task and should not be categorized a service animal. ESA’s are not pets.

*Owner*

The “Owner” is the resident student who has been permitted to keep an Approved Animal in housing under this policy.

*Approved Animal*

An “Approved Animal” is an Emotional Support Animal that has been permitted in The College of Wooster’s housing as a reasonable accommodation under this policy.

*Pet*

A “pet” is an animal kept for ordinary use and companionship. A pet is not considered a Service or an Emotional Support Animal. Students are not permitted to keep or bring pets on college property or in housing, with the exception of fish in a 10-gallon fish tank.
Guidelines and Requirements for ESA

The College of Wooster acknowledges that an ESA may be an appropriate accommodation for a documented disability. When reviewing students for an ESA on campus, the following objectives may be taken into consideration.

1. Generally, students may only apply to have one Emotional Support Animal on campus.
2. The animal’s vaccinations must be up-to-date, and the animal must be in good health.
3. Very young animals are not appropriate to have in Residence Hall settings for a variety of reasons. Generally, the animal must be 9 months of age or older.
4. The animal does not pose any health risks from zoonotic diseases or safety concerns regarding containment that cannot be sufficiently mitigated for inclusion in the communal living setting.
5. The animal does not pose and has not posed in the past a direct threat to the individual or others such as demonstrating aggressive behavior towards or injuring the individual or others.
6. The size of the animal must be appropriate for the size of the assigned room.
7. The animal must be housebroken and able to live with others in a reasonable manner.
8. The animals’ presence should not force another individual out of housing (e.g. serious allergies).
9. The animals’ presence should not violate individuals right to a quiet and peaceful environment.
10. The animal has not caused or may cause excessive damage to residential spaces beyond reasonable wear and tear.
11. Emotional Support Animals may be considered for access to college residential spaces, however, they are only permitted to be in the Owner’s assigned room. The animal must be caged when the owner is not in the room.
12. The Emotional Support Animal is not permitted in any other areas of the college (e.g. libraries, academic buildings, classrooms, labs, student center, etc.).
**How to Apply for an ESA?**

The student should follow the Housing Accommodation Process, which is outlined in the Students with Disabilities Policies and Procedure Handbook. These steps should be taken before Room Selection (Housing Lottery) as stated in the policy.

The request for the ESA should be given 60 days prior to move in. Should the need for an ESA arise during the semester, the request will be processed within the 60 days, but the ESA may not be granted during the current term.

If the need for the Emotional Support Animal arises after the student is already placed in housing, then the student should provide the required request form and disability documentation to the Learning Center as soon as possible. The college will make every effort to review such requests, however the college cannot guarantee that it will be reasonable or feasible to grant the ESA for the current or upcoming term.

As with all accommodations, students must provide medical documentation from a physician, psychiatrist, social worker, or other relevant and qualified mental health professional, including but not limited to (i) verification of the student’s disability, (ii) statement on how the animal serves as an accommodation for the documented disability, (iii) statement on how the need for the support animal relates to the ability of the student to use and gain benefit from college housing; (iv) statement on whether the animal in question would pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others that cannot be reduced or eliminated by another reasonable accommodation. Any necessary documentation must be dated within the last 30 days.

Once the Housing Accommodation Committee completes its review, the Learning Center will provide notification of the decision in writing to the student. Please note: Students will need to submit updated documentation annually in the spring through the housing accommodation process if they would like the animal approved as a continuing accommodation.

If the Emotional Support Animal is approved, the requesting student will need to meet with the Assistant Director of the Learning Center before bringing the animal onto campus to sign a Handler Agreement that includes the provisions of this policy. Notification will be sent out by the Learning Center to Residence Life, Security, the current/selected roommate, and any other appropriate offices.

**Under no circumstance should an ESA be brought into college residential spaces before being approved through the Learning Center Office. If the student is found with an unapproved animal, as with any student, that individual will be referred to the student conduct process.**

The student may appeal a denial of a request for an Emotional Support Animal within five business days to the ADA/504 Coordinator. This appeal should follow the grievance policy in the Students with Disabilities Policies and Procedure Handbook.
**Owner’s Responsibilities for Emotional Support Animals in Housing**

**The care and supervision of the Approved Animal is solely the responsibility of the Owner.**
The Owner is responsible for assuring that the Approved Animal does not unduly interfere or adversely affect the routine activities of other residents and neighbors. In addition, the Approved Animal must not pose a threat to the health, safety, or property of anyone in the community.

If the college determines that the Approved Animal threatens the health, safety, or property of anyone in the community, or that the Approved Animal is adversely affecting Wooster programs and activities, the college will take appropriate measures, up to and including a determination that the Approved Animal may no longer be permitted on campus.

**Health:**

The owner must abide with city, county, and state ordinances, laws, and/or regulations, the Emotional Support Animal must receive all required and/or recommended immunizations against diseases. Dogs must have current vaccination against rabies and wear a rabies vaccination tag. Local licensing requirements must be followed. The College may request updated verification regarding an Emotional Support Animals vaccination(s) at any time during the animal’s residency.

The owner’s animal must be in good health as documented annually by a licensed veterinarian. Appropriate documentation will be determined on a case-by-case basis but may include a vaccination certificate or veterinarian’s statement regarding the animal’s health. This documentation will need to be submitted during the Housing Accommodation Process. The college may require the ESA to be seen by a veterinarian if concerns for the animal’s health arise.

From time to time, the college may use pesticides, pest control devices, de-icing materials, cleaning supplies, and other materials for the maintenance and operation of undergraduate housing. The college is not responsible for any harm to Approved Animals caused by such materials.

**Control:**

The Owner must be in full control of the Emotional Support Animal at all times. The Emotional Support Animal must be contained within the student room at all times. If the student is not present in the room, the animal must be in a cage/crate.

When transporting the animal off campus or to eliminate waste, the animal should be secured by a leash, harness, or other tether, or in an appropriate cage/crate, while leaving the students room. The animal is not allowed to roam freely on campus grounds.
Approved Animals may not be left overnight in housing without the presence of the owner.

Financial:

The Owner is financially responsible for the Approved Animal, including for any bodily injury or property damage caused by the Approved Animal. The Owner’s financial responsibility may include replacement of furniture, carpet, window, wall covering, and costs of damage to other college owned property, just as any other resident would be responsible for damage.

The Owner is expected to cover these costs at the time of repair and/or move-out. The Owner is responsible for any expenses incurred for required cleaning above and beyond a standard cleaning or for repairs to college premises, just as any other resident would be responsible. Any such damages will be assessed after the Owner and Approved Animal vacate housing. The college shall bill the student account for unmet obligations.

Cleanliness:

It is the Owner’s responsibility to remove and properly dispose of any waste created by the animal. In order to ensure proper cleanup, ALL of the Approved Animal’s waste (e.g. urine, excrement, fur, cage shavings, etc.) should be disposed of in a tightly sealed bag and put into the outside dumpsters. All cleaning of animal products should be done in a custodial closet or at the Physical Plant located behind Longbrake Wellness Center. Students must ask for approval from the building custodial staff to use custodial closets 24 hours in advance of using the space. Students must clean up the space after using it. This includes but not limited to crates, water/food dishes, litter boxes and other related materials. Under no circumstances should the Common bathrooms be used to dispose of any waste or foster any cleaning routines. The student is financially responsible to provide their own cleaning supplies.

An Emotional Support Animal must be clean and well groomed, and measures should be taken at all times for flea and odor control. If fleas, ticks, or other pests are detected through inspection, the residence hall will be treated using approved fumigation methods by The College of Wooster’s approved pest control service. The Owner will be billed for the expense of any pest treatment above and beyond normal required pest management. This will be noted on the Room Condition form and during the Health and Safety Inspections.

Other Conditions:

The Learning Center and/or Residence Life may place other reasonable conditions or restrictions on the Emotional Support Animal depending on the particular facts and circumstances, including the nature and characteristics of the Emotional Support Animal.
The Owner must notify the Learning Center in writing if the Approved Animal is no longer needed or is no longer in residence. To replace an Approved Animal, the Owner must file a new Housing Accommodation Request Form.

**Removal of an Emotional Support Animal**

Residence Life may relocate the Owner and Approved Animal as necessary according to the College of Wooster’s housing contract.

The Owner agrees to continue to abide by all other college policies, including housing policies. Any violation of this policy may result in immediate removal of the Approved Animal from the college. Reported violations may be reviewed by the Students Rights and Responsibilities and Residential Life in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

Should the Approved Animal be removed from the premises for any reason, the Owner is expected to fulfill his/her housing obligations and the owner will be charged for the boarding of the animal for the remainder of The College of Wooster housing agreement. The animal will be placed with the agreed off campus handler as disclosed when signing the handler Agreement.