

# **ISAAT Standards for Institutions with Full Programs of Continuing Education in Animal Assisted Activities, Animal Assisted Education and/or Animal Assisted Therapy and Seeking Approval for Full Membership in ISAAT**

In order to provide high quality of continuing education in animal assisted therapy, animal assisted education and animal assisted activities, institutions offering courses in these interdisciplinary fields, which apply for examination by the independent ISAAT accreditation board and thereby, for full membership in ISAAT, must meet the following requirements:

## **1 Criteria for Admission**

In order to successfully complete the interdisciplinary program of studies in animal assisted therapy, animal assisted education, or animal assisted activities (in German: Tiergestützte Fördermassnahmen) students seeking admission must have graduated from high-school or an equivalent school.

Moreover, they must have successfully completed specific vocational training in some form of pedagogy, therapy, or in a health services profession. This usually is defined by successful completion of regular studies (at least a Bachelor's degree or equivalent) in pedagogy, in social work, in psychology, or in one form of therapy (e.g. occupational therapy, physiotherapy, psychotherapy, speech therapy), in theology, and/or in human or veterinary medicine.

Students should also have experience in working with at least some companion and/or farm animals typically used in animal assisted therapy, animal assisted education and animal assisted activities.

## **2 Qualification of Teachers**

Teachers in the program must be qualified in their fields. They must hold an academic degree in their respective field of expertise at the Master's level or higher. This holds for the fields of biology, ethology (animal and human behavior), psychology, pedagogy, human-animal interaction and communication, human and veterinary medicine, economics/public administration, and others.

Exceptions can be made in fields not or not yet widely represented at universities, e.g. in animal training. In these cases, the competence of teachers must be evident through success in practice.

## **3 Curriculum**

Programs of study must follow a curriculum of at least 225 hours of lectures and seminars (formal course work and supervised activities) on the following topics, which must be adequately covered in the curriculum.

Schools are encouraged to expand the curriculum; graduates of these programs are encouraged to attend additional courses related to animal assisted therapy, animal assisted education and animal assisted activities throughout their professional lives.

Schools are required to describe in detail how and by whom each of the following topics is taught.

- 3.1 Human-animal communication; theoretical explanations of somatic, social, and psychological effects of animal assisted activities, animal assisted education and animal assisted therapy.
- 3.2 Methods of pedagogical and therapeutic work (prevention, rehabilitation, salutogenesis) with companion animals and farm animals typically used in different fields of practice.
- 3.3 Methods of process and outcome evaluation.
- 3.4 Animals and ethics; animal welfare; animal care.
- 3.5 Ethology; animal behavior, normal development and behavior of at least one species frequently involved in animal assisted activities, animal assisted education, and animal assisted therapy.  
If only one species is involved (e.g. only dogs or only horses), then the aforementioned information must cover different breeds or forms of that species typically used in animal assisted work.
- 3.6 Methods and theories of animal learning.
- 3.7 Hygiene: Setting and observing standards of hygiene for humans and animals in animal assisted activities, animal assisted education and animal assisted therapy; plans for the prevention of risks of infections, allergies, zoonoses, and general risk management.
- 3.8 Organization of professional pedagogical and therapeutic work with animals; basic economic and administrative knowledge.
- 3.9 Students must complete at least 40 hours of practical work in venues offering animal assisted activities, animal assisted education or animal assisted therapy, and write a report on their observations/experiences.

#### **4 Thesis**

Students have to write a thesis (minimum 80 hours), preferably on a topic that integrates a theoretical theme with their professional expertise.

#### **5 Conditions of Study and of Certification**

Institutions must have written conditions of study and of certification. They must distinguish between certificates for animal assisted activities, animal assisted education, and animal assisted therapy.

## 6 Examination Regulations

Institutions must have written examination regulations. They must have an interdisciplinary examination committee of professionals.

## 7 Criteria of admission

Institutions offering continuing education in animal assisted activities, animal assisted education and animal assisted therapy should be allowed to admit no more than 10 percent of students who do not meet the regular criteria of admission. However, the biography of these applicants must show clear evidence of high motivation for social and/or educational work, and preferably experience in para-professional work in social institutions.

## 8 Certificate/diploma

The certificates/diplomas of graduates of the programs of institutions recommended for full membership in ISAAT must state that the graduate is qualified “to involve animals correctly while working within his/her own profession”. (in German: dass sie/er bei der Ausübung ihres/seines Berufes professionell Tiere einbeziehen kann.)

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