

Draft framework curriculum

of the International Society for Animal Assisted Therapy (ISAAT)
for the

Continuing education for animal-assisted interventions specialists

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Preliminary remarks

The framework curriculum is a syllabus for further training to become a specialist in animal assisted interventions, which describes the competencies aimed for. The framework curriculum does not contain any methodological specifications for teaching. Since the participants have different experiences and backgrounds, the framework curriculum must be quite open. It only "provides the framework".

The framework curriculum is structured according to learning fields. It can be adapted to the needs of the individual further education institutes. This is done by implementing and adapting the framework curriculum into their own curricula.

The framework curriculum provides the basic topics for the specific content of the ISAAT accredited further training courses for specialists in animal-assisted interventions. As a basic framework for the implementation of further training according to the ISAAT criteria, it has a binding effect on the curricula and the curricula of the further training providers.

The further training to become a specialist for animal-assisted interventions is primarily

intended to enable graduates to independently plan, implement and evaluate animal-assisted interventions (hereinafter referred to as AAI), to work as a specialist within an interdisciplinary project team or to lead such a team. This is realized in the relationship triangle between specialist, animal and client in an individual or group setting. At the same time, animal ethical considerations, the goal-oriented interventions for the client, and the abilities and skills of the specialist, on the background of their basic profession, as well as team-specific communication and organizational concerns must be taken into account.

Based on, that

1. in the goal-oriented intervention on and with the client, the animal is included in this work as a subject with special consideration of its needs;
2. it is not just about implementing animals that makes a difference that makes a difference, but a team effort;
3. the planned, monitored and quality-assured intervention of an AAI specialist together with animals leads to success.

Within the framework of continuing education, the focus is therefore on the ability to act in the relationship triangle. In this context, not the learning content or curricula are decisive (they merely serve to organize a continuing education program and to select the specialist lecturers), but rather the learning outcomes achieved by the graduates, which have to be verified in a comprehensible manner through performance assessments. Therefore, all points of the framework curriculum are described as learning outcomes in an action-oriented manner. The base for describing the learning outcomes are the descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF): knowledge, skills and competences¹.

The concept of competence is constitutive of action competence, here in the sense of action competence TGI and is described in this way:

"Competency determinations, unlike other constructs such as skills, bring

*(skills), knowledge, qualifications, etc., which are available as dispositions. self-organizing abilities of the concrete individual to the concept. [...] Competences can include experiences, abilities, will components, knowledge and values - but they cannot be reduced to these, but include them in relations relevant to disposition and action. Competencies are founded by knowledge, constituted by values, disposed as abilities, consolidated by experiences, realized due to will. Self-organized ability to act is the target point of each Skills Development."*²

All training courses for AAI specialists should therefore be designed to develop basic and further competencies of graduates to act professionally. The description and organization of the learning content, the formats of teaching and learning used and the forms of performance assessment must be subject to this objective. The latter should not only test knowledge, but focus on the practical ability to act in complex AAI. If possible, written examinations always have a reference to practice. Practical examinations (also final theses) always have action-situational parts in which the person acting presents his or her performance in mastering the respective situation. The performance shown is the observable and assessable expression of the respective action competence.

¹European Commission (ed.): The European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF). Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg 2008.

²ERPENBECK, JOHN / VON ROSENSTIEL, LUTZ: Handbuch Kompetenzmessung. Recognizing, Understanding and Evaluating Competencies in Operational, Educational and Psychological Practice, Stuttgart 2003, 365f.

The framework curriculum is designed to provide high-quality, comprehensive continuing education, and the following aspects are essential to this end:

- Animal-assisted work is based on the definitions of the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations (IAHAIO).

- The encounter of animals and people with whom work is done is carried out with respect and esteem; the orientation of animal-assisted work is carried out according to the ethical principles of the respective profession for the benefit of people and animals.
- An intensive, cooperative and sustainable relationship with the animals in use.
- Knowing the individual preferences and needs of the animals.
- In the event of arising stress or discomfort related to animal-assisted work, immediate action is taken to ensure the animal's well-being.
- Each animal used and / or kept is cared for in a manner appropriate to the species. The "IAHAIO Definitions for Animal Assisted Interventions and Guidelines for the Welfare of the Animals Involved" and equivalent country-specific guidelines for the respective animal species (such as, in Germany, the "Recommendations of the Veterinary Association for Animal Welfare (TVT)") are mandatory.
- For animal-assisted work, the quality criteria guide "Quality development and quality assurance in the practice of animal-assisted interventions" by Dr. Rainer Wohlfarth and Prof. (em.) Dr. Erhard Olbrich⁽¹⁾ is strongly recommended

Learning outcomes, knowledge, skills, competencies

I. Animal Assisted Interventions Specialty

1. Basics of the human-animal-relationship
 - 1.1. Models of the human-animal-relationship
 - 1.2. Ethics of the human-animal-relationship

Learning Outcome:	<p>Graduates will be able to reflect the current state of relevant research on the development relationships between humans and animals. They can describe the ethological, anthropological as well as the social and religious factors and influences on the human-animal-relationship that are essential for animal-assisted interventions.</p> <p>They can name prerequisites for successful human-animal or animal human communication and apply them practically in handling with animals. They can reflect and present their personal relationship to animals against the background of the current discussion on animal welfare and ethics of the human-animal relationship.</p>
EQF dimensions	
Knowledge:	<p>Graduates will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehend the common phylogenetic developmental history of vertebrates (social biological and anthropological theories of human-animal relationships) - as relevant to animal assisted interventions. • Discuss aspects of the human-animal relationship relevant to animal-assisted interventions based on culture, religion, and society. • Differentiate forms of animal use then and now • Reflect on ethics and morality in the relationship between humans and animals • Explain the basics of human-animal communication • Reflect on the history and current perspective of animal welfare and animal protection • Knowledge of the respective animal protection legislation of the countries in which AAI is practiced as well as regulations and recommendations that go beyond it
Skills:	/.
Competencies:	<p>Graduates form and reflect on their own basic ethical stance on implementing intervention companion animals as well as on the human-animal relationship in general. They integrate animals in AAI based on ethical and legal principles.</p>

2. Animal Assisted Interventions

2.1. Basics AAI

2.1.1. Explanatory models AAI

2.1.2. Definition AAI

2.1.3. Methods AAI

2.1.4. Relationship and process design in AAI (intervention triangle)

2.1.5. Scientific studies on the effectiveness of AAI

2.1.6. Planning and organization in the AAI environment (organizational and project management, intervention planning)

2.2. Fields of application of AAI

2.2.1. Educational, psychological, rehabilitative and socially integrative services with animals for children, adolescents, adults or elderly people with cognitive, social-emotional and physical disabilities, behavioral disorders, general remedial focus and competence enhancement.

2.2.2. Best practice examples AAI from Germany and abroad

2.3. Law

2.3.1. Legal requirements and aspects for AAI

2.3.2. Hygiene management

2.3.3. Risk Management

Learning Outcome:	Graduates will be able to explain the explanatory models of AAI and describe them using examples. They can define AAI as an umbrella term and differentiate the various forms of AAI according to their definitions (e.g. ESAAT, IAHAIO). According to their basic profession they are able to plan, implement and evaluate activities or concepts of AAI by taking into account the legal requirements, hygiene and risk management, and the need of continuously assessing quality assurance. They understand and consider the necessary legal requirements.
EQF dimensions	
Knowledge:	Graduates will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name methods of AAI• Characterize and distinguish between fields of application of the AAI• Describe application examples for AAI• Name hypotheses and results of scientific studies on the explanation and effectiveness of AAI• distinguish different forms of AAI• Name the animal protection legislation of the respective country as well as regulations and recommendations that go beyond this.

<p>Skills:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish and critically evaluate explanatory models of AAI • Apply methods of AAI adequately • Reflect and consider the specifics of the intervention triangle • Understanding the quality dimensions in the AAI as a continuous process • Plan, implement and evaluate measures for the evaluation of AAI • Design a hygiene plan, and if needed, coordinate it with the responsible persons or agencies
<p>Competencies:</p>	<p>The graduates will be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop structured concepts for measures, services or facilities on the basis of targeted animal-assisted interventions. In doing so, they can name the added value that arises from the use of the animal beyond their professional actions in their respective basic profession and thus, justify the implementation of an animal. • implement AAI in practice according to their concepts. In doing so, they take into account legal requirements as well as basic principles of hygiene when dealing with different animal species. They act according to ethical principles in the use of animals, as well as the safety of humans and animals over the course of an intervention. They carry out a risk assessment during the planning stage and take precautions to minimize risks in the animal-assisted setting. They recognize the need for external support and select appropriate forms of professional or peer support and use self-regulatory measures. • Implement the described competencies with the support of the respective specialist personnel if no adequate basic profession has been acquired for the goal of the AAI.

3. Animal husbandry (farming) and preparation for animal-assisted use

3.1. Professional animal husbandry for animals in AAI

3.2. Training of animals for use in AAI

<p>Learning Outcome:</p>	<p>Graduates will be able to plan and sustainably implement the placement of animals in a facility, taking into account the necessary legal regulations and principles of species-appropriate animal husbandry, animal welfare and ethics. They can prepare trained animals and their owners non aversively and according to their dispositions for AAI.</p>
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EQF dimensions	
Knowledge:	<p>The graduates can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproduce important legal and ethical principles concerning animal welfare and husbandry. • name spatial, temporal, personnel resources related to the requirements of the selected species
Skills:	<p>Graduates are able to apply concepts of animal-specific needs (e.g. the hedonic budget) to different animal species. They prepare the trained animal and its owner for animal-assisted use according to the breed-specific, species-specific and individual requirements of the animal as well as in relation to specific client groups and subsequently reflect on these and change or adapt them if necessary.</p>
Competencies:	<p>In their approach, graduates take into account species and breed specific as well as individual needs and abilities of animals or incorporate these into the concept of TGI. They apply the necessary measures for disease prevention and health promotion in animals as the situation requires. In doing so, they take into account the legal framework conditions in their work.</p> <p>Participants are able to prepare trained animals with adequate training methods for animal-assisted use or to train and guide the animal owners for animal-assisted settings.</p>

ii. Psychology specialty

1. Psychological basics TGI

Learning Outcome:	<p>Graduates are able to consider basic principles of psychology related to their animal-assisted work, especially including knowledge from general, developmental and clinical psychology</p>
EQF dimensions	
Knowledge:	<p>Graduates will be able to name basic principles of developmental, health, general and clinical psychology. They are aware of the various benefits of AAI on the mental health of people of different ages.</p>
Skills:	/

Competencies:	Graduates are able to conduct AAI appropriately and responsibly according to relevant psychological criteria. In their work, they take into account the foundations from the disciplines mentioned. This includes, in particular, recognizing anxiety or signs of stress in clients and reacting to them accordingly.
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2. Basics psychopathology

Learning Outcome:	Graduates will be able to fundamentally assess and evaluate the potential influence of TGI on selected psychopathological disorders/diseases in childhood and adulthood, both as primary disorders and as comorbidity disorders. They coordinate the course and content of the TGI with the responsible therapists and physicians. Graduates are able to identify which animals are suitable to be implemented for people with mental disorders/illnesses. They have the skills necessary to carry out a risk assessment for humans and animals.
EQF dimensions	
Knowledge:	Basic knowledge of mental/psychiatric disorders as they relate to animal-assisted interventions in adulthood, youth, and childhood: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety disorders • Depression • Addictive disorders • Obsessive Compulsive Disorder • Eating disorders • Dissocial behavior • Autism • Developmental Disabilities • Psychoses • Post-traumatic stress disorder • Diagnostic criteria for mental disorders; need for treatment; possible intervention approaches.
Skills:	/

Competencies:	<p>Graduates are able to make a professional and responsible assessment of the appropriateness of the use of animals for the respective intervention goal.</p> <p>They are aware of the necessity of closely cooperating and coordinating with the treating therapists and physicians.</p> <p>They are able to make a preliminary assessment of ensuring safety as well as the physical and psychological integrity of client and animal.</p>
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3. Resource oriented models

Learning Outcome:	<p>Graduates will be able to explain models of resource orientation and describe them using examples. The principles of these models are rooted in both the planning and practical implementation of AAI with regard to data collection and target setting as well as the selection of specific animals.</p>
EQF dimensions	
Knowledge:	<p>The graduates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can describe models of resource orientation • can name possible saluto genetic effects in AAI
Skills:	<p>Structuring of the anamnesis interview to record resource-oriented factors</p>
Competencies:	<p>Graduates are able to theoretically link models of resource orientation and AAI and are able to plan and practically implement AAI with regard to resource-oriented effects.</p>

4. Mental hygiene for the helping professions

Learning Outcome:	<p>Given their respective professional background, graduates are aware of various possibilities to support their own mental hygiene. They can critically reflect mental health-related dynamics with regard to their work.</p>
EQF dimensions	

Knowledge:	<p>Graduates are aware of different possibilities to support mental hygiene:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision • Intersession • support from colleagues • self-regulatory measures <p>Graduates understand the importance of self-reflection, mood regulation, and dealing with anger and adversity in animal-assisted work.</p>
Skills:	<p>Graduates will be able to reflect on their inner attitudes, use methods of self-care, mindfulness and relaxation specifically for themselves.</p>
Competencies:	<p>Graduates are able to take care of their own mental hygiene. They can critically assess the various possibilities and use them accordingly as required. In doing so, they take into account the special situation of the AAI.</p>

iii. Pedagogy specialty

Learning Outcome:	<p>Graduates will be able to describe fields of application of AAI in the field of pedagogy and special education and distinguish them from other specialist areas. They can assess which animals are suitable for different pedagogical fields of application. They can carry out a risk assessment for humans and animals.</p>
EQF dimensions	
Knowledge:	<p>Pedagogical foundations and models:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development orientation • Resource orientation • Solution orientation <p>Dealing with mental, cognitive and physical impairments</p>
Skills:	/
Competencies:	<p>Graduates will be able to describe and reflect on the various fields of application and limitations of animal-assisted pedagogy. They can plan, implement and evaluate suitable AAI to achieve pedagogical goals.</p>

IV. Medicine specialty

1. Fundamentals of gerontology and geriatrics

Learning Outcome:	Graduates will be able to describe fields of application of animal assisted intervention in the field of geriatrics and distinguish them from other specialist fields. They can assess which animals are suitable for geriatric fields of application and specific clinics. They can carry out a risk assessment for humans and animals for this field.
EQF dimensions	
Knowledge:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview of specific geriatric medical conditions, such as. e.g. dementia; Parkinson's disease; stroke, immobility, visual impairment, hearing loss• Opportunities for AAI (activities), such as animal visitation service, resident animals• targeted approaches of AAI for the elderly
Skills:	Graduates will be able to plan AAI to maintain existing abilities and/or activate resources for mental and/or physical changes in aging.
Competencies:	Graduates can carry out a professional and responsible assessment of the appropriateness of the use of animals in the context of the elderly. They can assess challenges related to the use of animals in the geriatric field for humans and animals and act accordingly.

2. Basics of chronic and acute diseases

Learning Outcome:	Graduates will be able to describe fields of application of AAI in the area of chronic and/or acute somatic illnesses and distinguish them from other specialist areas. They can assess which animals are suitable for fields of application in specific somatic diseases. They can carry out a risk assessment for humans and animals in interdisciplinary coordination for this field.
EQF dimensions	

Knowledge:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of specific somatic diseases, such as • e.g. multiple sclerosis, diabetes, cancer, Parkinson's disease; stroke, rheumatic diseases, chronic pain, etc. • Possibilities of AAI: visiting services or resident animals in the fields of physical rehabilitation; pain management, reducing and coping with anxiety
Skills:	Graduates will be able to plan AAI to maintain existing skills and/or activate resources as well as support individual processes slow down the progression of the disease and facilitate coping with the illness
Competencies:	Graduates will be able to make a professional and responsible assessment of the appropriateness of the use of animals in the context of somatic diseases. They can assess challenges related to the use of animals in the field for humans and animals and act accordingly across the interdisciplinary approach.

3. Human first aid

Learning Outcome:	In the event of an accident, graduates initiate immediate life-saving measures to avert imminent danger or any threat to health until professional support arrives. They take precautions and apply self protection measures. Graduates take into account the special features of accidents involving and/or caused by animals.
EQF dimensions	
Knowledge:	<p>Initial actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General • Self-protection • Emergency response system • First aid for external injuries, wound dressings • Life-saving immediate measures • Behavior in case of injuries caused by animals (e.g. bites, scratches, blows, falls) • Special features when securing accident sites with animal involvement • Self-protection in case of accidents with or caused by animals
Skills:	Initiation of immediate life-saving measures and activation of the emergency response system

Competencies:	Graduates are able to provide first aid. They demonstrate adequate action in complex and challenging situations.
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v. Department of Ethology and Veterinary Medicine

1. Ethological basics

Learning Outcome:	Graduates recognize desirable skills for AAI in domesticated animals resulting from the process of domestication. They can name areas of application of animals for AAI and justify their use with regard to their specific abilities and dispositions as well as their representation in our society.
EQF dimensions	
Knowledge:	Pet Ethology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position of the animal in society; ethical aspects • Domestication, natural species behavior(hedonic budget). • Learning behavior, skills and stress signs of animals suitable for AAI.
Skills:	/
Competencies:	Graduates consider species- and breed-specific as well as individual animal needs and abilities in their approach.

2. Animal learning behavior

Learning Outcome:	Graduates will be able to name and apply the basic learning theories in animals. They can apply these when preparing trained animals and their owners for AAI.
EQF dimensions	
Knowledge:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning theories: Conditioning, reinforcement,model learning, social learning, and others. • Learning behavior of the animal and signs of stress • Suitability of animals in terms of their learning behavior for AAI • Knowledge about the individual preparation of animals for animal-assisted use, taking into account the human-animal team dynamics.

Skills:	/
Competencies:	The graduates demonstrate a sense of responsibility already during the planning of AAI by focusing on "therapy" companion animals. They are able to select suitable animals for a specific target group and prepare the human-animal team with adequate methods for AAI.

3. Relationship design

Learning Outcome:	Graduates are able to form relationships that are beneficial for humans and animals. In doing so, they can use their scientifically-based integrated knowledge of the development, education and socialization of humans and animals, by building on their perceptual skills and knowledge of different forms of communicating with animals.
EQF dimensions	
Knowledge:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Models and expressions of communication humans and different animal species • Factors influencing successful communication • Successful of relationship building
Skills:	Ability to communicate efficiently with animals used in AAI and understand their communicative signals.
Competencies:	<p>The graduates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can recognize the non-verbal signals of the animals used and react accordingly • can perceive their own role in guiding mutually beneficial relationships, reflect on the process and adjust self-directed actions • reflect on their own verbal and non-verbal communication impacting humans and animals and develop this skill further in a sustainable manner • react to arising disturbances in the relationship adequately, early, individualized and flexible

4. Animal Health/First Aid for Animals

<p>Learning Outcome:</p>	<p>Graduates assess the state of health of the animal in general and especially in relation to animal-assisted use and intervene adequately in the event of restrictions, injuries and hazards. They can recognize and classify signs of stress and illness in various animal species at an early stage. They prevent overloading situations.</p>
<p>EQF dimensions</p>	
<p>Knowledge:</p>	<p>Animal Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal health: vaccination, parasite treatment; nutrition, care, husbandry, etc. • Zoonoses Transmissible diseases from animals from southern countries used for AAI (leishmaniasis, babesiosis, ...) • Assessment of the suitability of animals for use • Assessment of the situation • Stress, pain and aggression in animals • Signs of disease; age
<p>Skills:</p>	<p>First aid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of vital signs: Respiratory rate, heart rate, mucous membranes, body temperature. • Application of bandages to a dog as example • Immediate life-saving measures: Mouth-to-snout ventilation, heat stroke treatment, etc. • Medicine chest / emergency kit
<p>Competencies:</p>	<p>Graduates are able to assess the state of health of the "therapy" companion animal, recognizing signs of physical and psychological overload in complex and challenging situations. They can initiate measures to maintain animal health, provide first aid and recognize when veterinary assistance is needed. They demonstrate a sense of responsibility, problem-solving skills and stress resistance in such situations.</p>

vi. Other specialties and topics

1. Basics of scientific work

2. Presentation and communication forms

<p>Learning Outcome:</p>	<p>Graduates will be able to read scientific papers and critically evaluate them with regard to research design and results. They can use the knowledge gained from studies for their own work. They can theoretically justify, document, evaluate and critically reflect on their own AAI within the framework of a written thesis.</p> <p>They can present outcomes of their work appropriately and to a target audience using various presentation techniques, forms and methods.</p> <p>Graduates are familiar with basic elements of communication, organization and project management in order to contribute to or lead a team.</p>
<p>EQF dimensions</p>	
<p>Knowledge:</p>	<p>Graduates will know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • different presentation techniques, forms and methods • Guidelines for scientific work when citing used literature and other sources • Basic knowledge of copyright and data protection law
<p>Skills:</p>	<p>Graduates will be able to design and create presentations using various methods. They are skilled in handling the hardware and software necessary to create a presentation. They are further able to support or implement their work in all communicative, organizational and project-related matters.</p>

<p>Competencies:</p>	<p>Graduates will be able to select, read and critically evaluate literature relevant to the design of a AAI. They can present AAI in written or oral form. They are aware of the importance of primary sources and mark used quotations as such. They label and document used technical literature and other sources according to the current guidelines and standards of scientific work - according to the specifications of their basic profession. They acknowledge the requirements of copyright and data protection. They select appropriate presentation techniques, forms and methods according to the aim and recipients of a presentation and can deliver them in front of an audience.</p>
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