Bard College at Simon’s Rock
Policy on Emotional Support or Companion Animals in Student Housing

Animals, including pets, are not permitted in Bard College at Simon’s Rock student housing with the exception of Service Dogs. The College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to qualified students with disabilities who require an Emotional Support or Companion Animal (from here on referred to as a Companion Animal) and may permit these animals to live in a student’s personal residence provided that they comply with the College’s policies regarding such animals.

Students who seek to bring a Companion Animal into residential housing must first submit a written request for approval to the Director of Accessibility and Academic Support. She will determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether to approve a student’s request for a Companion Animal. Students seeking to have a Companion Animal in student housing must submit a request for review each academic year.

A request for a Companion Animal should be submitted directly to the Director of Accessibility and Academic Support preferably at the same time as the application for student housing. The animal must not be in residence prior to approval by Director of Accessibility and Academic Support and the Director of Residence Life. The approval of a request is animal-specific and is not transferable to another animal.

Definitions

Emotional Support Animal/Companion Animal. Emotional Support Animals or Companion Animals are animals that provide emotional support which alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of an individual’s existing disability. A Companion animal must be required by an individual with a disability, in his/her residence, in order to have an equal opportunity to use and enjoy the residence/dwelling.

Dangerous, poisonous, and illegal animals are not permitted as Companion Animals. Animals whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support are Companion Animals, not Service Animals.

Pet. A pet is an animal kept for ordinary use and companionship. A pet is not considered a Service or a Companion Animal. Individuals are not permitted to keep or bring pets on College property or in student housing.

Approved Companion Animal. Approved Companion Animals are animals that have been permitted in designated areas of student housing as a reasonable accommodation under this policy.

Owner. The Owner is the resident student who has received written permission from the College to keep an Approved Companion Animal in student housing under this policy.
Application and Approval Process

A student seeking to keep a Companion Animal in student housing must make a formal request to the Director of Accessibility and Academic Support. To do so, the student should submit a written request at the same time as the application for housing, before the housing selection deadline. While applications submitted after these dates will be accepted and considered, the College cannot guarantee that it will be able to meet late applicants’ accommodation requests. Any approval under this policy is valid for one academic year. In order to request an accommodation for a Companion Animal to reside in the dorm, a formal request must be made to the Director of Accessibility and Academic Support providing medical or psychological documentation on the letterhead of a treating physician, psychiatrist, social worker, or other mental health professional, stating a disability, and the reason a Companion Animal is required. There must be an identifiable and clearly established relationship between the individual’s disability and the assistance the animal provides. Any necessary documentation must be dated within the last 12 months. After receiving completed documentation for the application for a Companion Animal, the Director of Accessibility and Academic Support will arrange to meet with or speak to the requesting student. This policy will be reviewed with the student at that time.

Notification and Appeal Rights

If the request for a Companion Animal is approved by the Director of Accessibility and Academic Support, the Director of Residence Life will then contact the student in order to discuss housing options and housing approval. If appropriate housing is available at that time the College will notify the Owner who will be required to sign this policy. Failure or refusal to sign this policy will result in a revocation of the approval. Once the student has signed the policy, Residence Life staff will make a reasonable effort to notify the other residents in the student housing where the Approved Companion Animal will be located. This notice will be limited to information about the Approved Companion Animal’s presence as an accommodation to a student with a disability: there will be no disclosure of the student’s disability. Other resident students with medical condition(s) who are affected by an Approved Companion Animal (e.g., respiratory diseases, asthma, severe allergies) are asked to contact Residential Life if they have a health or safety related concern about exposure to an Approved Companion Animal. Such affected students may be eligible for a disability accommodation when living in proximity to an Approved Companion Animal. Disability Services and Residence Life staff will collaborate, as necessary, to resolve conflicts related to an Approved Companion Animal. Staff members will consider the needs and/or accommodations of all resident students involved.

All roommates or suitemates of the Owner must acknowledge in writing that the Approved Companion Animal will be in residence with them. In the event that one or more roommates or suitemates do not approve, either the Owner and the Approved Companion Animal or the non-approving roommates or suitemates, as determined by the Residence Life staff, may be moved to a different location. Written acknowledgement from a parent is required for roommates or suitemates under age 18.
The requesting student may appeal a denial of a request for a Companion Animal within five business days to the Dean of Students. The student must appeal the denial in writing. The decision of the Dean of Students is final.

**Owner’s Responsibilities for Approved Companion Animals in Student Housing**

The Owner must comply with the following provisions regarding behavior and care of Approved Companion Animals:

**Vaccination.** In accordance with local ordinances and regulations, the Approved Companion Animal must receive all required and/or recommended immunizations against diseases. Local licensing requirements must be followed. The College may request an updated verification regarding an Approved Companion Animal’s vaccinations at any time during the animal’s residency.

**Health.** Approved Companion Animals must be in good health as documented annually by a licensed veterinarian. The College has authority to direct that the Approved Companion Animal receive veterinary attention in appropriate circumstances.

**Control.** The Owner must be in full control of the Approved Companion Animal at all times. The animal must generally be on a leash, harness, or other tether or in an appropriate crate.

**Cleanliness.** It is the Owner’s responsibility to remove and properly dispose of the Approved Companion Animal’s waste (e.g. urine, excrement, fur, cage shavings, etc.), which must be placed in a sturdy plastic bag before disposal. An Approved Companion Animal must be clean and well groomed, and measures should be taken at all times for flea and odor control. The Owner will be held responsible for any room damages, including excess cleaning and/or replacement of the carpet.

**Other Conditions**

- Residence Life may place other reasonable conditions or restrictions on the Approved Companion Animal depending on the particular facts and circumstances, including the nature and characteristics of the animal.

- The Owner is responsible for assuring that the Approved Companion Animal does not unduly interfere or adversely affect the routine activities of student housing or other residents. In addition, the Approved Companion Animal must not pose a threat to the health, safety, or property of anyone in the Bard College at Simon’s Rock community.

- The care and supervision of the Approved Companion Animal is solely the responsibility of the Owner. The Owner is responsible for ensuring the safety of an Approved Companion Animal and the College community. If the College determines that an animal is being neglected or mistreated, or has been abandoned, the College may remove the animal from its owner. A warning may not be given before an animal is removed from its owner due to safety concerns.
The Owner is financially responsible for the Approved Companion Animal, including for any bodily injury or property damage caused by the Approved Companion Animal. The Owner’s financial responsibility may include replacement of furniture, carpet, window, wall covering, and costs of damage to other College owned property. The Owner is expected to cover these costs at the time of repair and/or move-out.

The Owner must notify Disability Services and Residential Life in writing if the Approved Companion Animal is no longer needed or is no longer in residence. To replace an Approved Companion Animal, the Owner must submit a new written request to Disability Services.

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 student housing. The College is not responsible for any harm to Approved Companion Animals caused by such materials.

Approved Companion Animals may not be left overnight in student housing without the Owner. Approved Companion Animals must be taken with the Owner if the Owner leaves campus overnight. The Owner must make proper arrangements for the care of an animal while the residence halls are closed for breaks. The need to care for an Approved Companion Animal is not on its own a valid reason for permission to stay on campus over a break.

The Owner agrees to continue to abide by all other College policies including student housing policies. Any violation of this policy may result in immediate removal of the Approved Companion Animal from the College. Reported violations will be reviewed by the Office of Student Affairs.

The College may ask an Owner to remove his or her Approved Companion Animal when it is out of control and the Owner does not take action to control it, when it is not housebroken, or when it poses a threat to health and safety.

The College may prohibit the use of Approved Companion Animals in certain locations due to health or safety hazards, where animals may be endangered, or where their use may compromise or fundamentally alter the nature of a program or activity.

**Revocation of Approval**

The College will take appropriate measures, up to and including revocation of approval for a Companion Animal if, among other reasons:

- The Owner violates any term of this policy, after notice and reasonable opportunity to cure when possible;
The Approved Companion Animal is no longer needed to assist with a disability;

The College determines that the Approved Companion Animal threatens the health, safety, or property of anyone in the College community, or that the Approved Companion Animal is adversely affecting College’s programs and activities or

The College discovers that false or misleading information was provided in the Owner’s application for approval of a Companion Animal.

The College reserves the right to make an interim accommodation while determining appropriate measures.

The requesting student may appeal revocation of approval of a Companion Animal within five business days of the notice of revocation to the Dean of Students. The student must do so in writing. The decision of the Dean of Students is final.

Requirements for Faculty, Staff, Students, and Other Members of the College Community

- Members of the College community are required to abide by the following practices:
- They are not to touch or pet an Approved Companion Animal unless invited to do so.
- They are not to feed an Approved Companion Animal.
- They are not to stare at Approved Companion Animal.
- They are not to separate or to attempt to separate an Owner from his or her Approved Companion Animal.
- They are not to inquire for details about the Owner’s disabilities. The nature of a person’s disability is a private matter.

By my signature below, I verify that I have read, understand and will abide by the above policy.

______________________________________________  ____________
Owner*                                          Date

If Owner is under 18 years old:
I ______________________ am the parent or legal guardian of the Owner. I have read, understand, and agree to the above policy

*Owner signature required in all cases, even where Owner’s parent/legal guardian is also required to sign.