Companion animal welfare and behavioural rehabilitation
Undergraduate
The Certificate of Higher Education in Companion Animal Welfare and Behavioural Rehabilitation is based in the University’s internationally renowned Animal Welfare and Behaviour research group at the School of Veterinary Sciences at Langford. The group has conducted research on cats and dogs, including applied topics such as training methods in dogs and their association with problematic behaviours; clinical studies such as the development of separation-related behaviour and fears in dogs, and influences of stress and environment on disease; as well as more fundamental research developing new cognitive methods for assessing welfare in dogs.

This two-year part-time course is designed to specifically fulfil the requirements for those working practically with dogs in the rehoming centre environment either as an employee or volunteer. Although the content is evidence-based from the most up-to-date research, it is presented in an accessible style, with a focus on practical implementation.

### Why study companion animal welfare and behaviour rehabilitation at Bristol?

The aim is for participants to finish the course with a comprehensive understanding of the behaviour of dogs, and an ability to implement their understanding in practical situations, from interviewing relinquishing owners and evaluating dogs entering the kennel, to using basic rehabilitation techniques, evaluating the welfare of individual dogs, and giving new owners follow up advice.

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**I run the RSPCA Manchester and Salford Branch, which includes managing the animal rehabilitation and rehoming side of the charity. At the branch we have already implemented many new procedures following my studies, specifically around assessment and training, but also with regard to meeting the behavioural needs of other companion animals in our care. The learning experience has really helped to enhance our practices and I would argue that the course should be essential attendance for animal shelter managers.**

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**Susie**  
(Certificate HE) 13/14  
RSPCA Manager, Manchester and Salford Branch
What will I study?

Cert Companion Animal Welfare and Behaviour Rehabilitation, two years, part-time, direct entry

The course is divided into five units, each of which runs over a full week. The first unit covers study skills before going on to look at: ethology, genetics and the development of behaviour; understanding learning theory and its application to behaviour modification and training; stress, welfare and the physiology of behaviour; finishing with a unit of case studies.

Study Skills provides an introduction to study and research skills, including the use of the library and electronic resources, developing study strategies, communicating effectively, working in groups and writing for academic purposes. The course includes a mixture of formal lecture sessions, computer-based learning sessions and seminars.

Ethology, genetics and the development of behaviour provides an introduction to understanding canine behaviour. It is only by understanding ‘natural’ dog behaviour, and how individual dogs develop and learn about their environment, that we can understand how ‘problem behaviours’ occur and how we can best approach dealing with them in the rehoming centre environment.

Unit two introduces the concepts underlying associative learning. It makes the principles of learning as relevant as possible to the experiences of rehoming centre staff, through a mixture of lectures, interactive practicals and case examples. The objective for this unit is for you to be able to interpret how an individual dog’s previous experiences are likely to have influenced its current behaviour.

Unit four introduces the physiology of behaviour, starting with basic principles and going on to discuss in more detail the influence of specific physiological changes on behaviour. The main aim of this unit is to highlight the importance of recognising other factors that have an influence on the initiation or development of undesirable behaviours. This includes normal physiological changes that might influence behaviour, such as changes in sex hormones, but also the influence of medical conditions such as pain. You will then be given some practical guidelines for evaluating the response of individual dogs to the kennel situation. The emphasis is to move away from the idea of dogs being generically ‘kennel stressed’ to identifying specifically what aspect of the environment is likely to be affecting an individual dog so that interventions to improve quality of life are targeted.

The aim of the final unit is to integrate the information provided in earlier units, with some examples of the types of cases commonly seen within rehoming centres. There is discussion on approaches to gathering information about dogs entering rehoming centres. This involves obtaining relevant information from relinquishing owners where possible, but also observation of each dog’s response to different circumstances and experiences in the centre.

This course consists of five one-week residential units based at our School of Veterinary Sciences at Langford, plus three rehoming centre-based practical sessions, spread across the two years. Teaching involves a mixture of lectures, seminars and practical sessions, to ensure that you have the opportunity to discuss the information and approaches covered and also put the theory into practice under the guidance of tutors.

Assessments for the course are based around a mixture of written assignments and practical tasks.
The course aims to equip you with the skills required to gain employment in a role where you will have responsibility for the welfare assessment and behavioural rehabilitation of animals. It is ideal for those seeking specialised roles within the animal welfare sector, as well as those aiming to work in the private sector as specialised animal training instructors.

What are my career prospects?

The course is open to anyone currently working or volunteering at a rehoming centre or rescue organisation. The course is direct entry by application to the School of Veterinary Sciences. We do not accept applications for this course through UCAS.

You can download an application form from our website: bristol.ac.uk/vetscience/study/undergraduate/awbr/#apply.

Applications open in February for October entry. All applicants are invited to interview.

Making your application

Typical offer for Cert Companion Animal Welfare and Behaviour Rehabilitation*

Visit bristol.ac.uk/ug16-companional or other qualifications

A-levels CC

IB Diploma 18 points overall including 5 in higher level science

English Language Profile C††

GCSEs Five GCSEs at grade C or above including English and two sciences.

††For details of English language profiles, visit bristol.ac.uk/ug-language-requirements

Selection Application form and interview – please contact us for an application form. You should apply directly to the University and not through UCAS. This course is only open to applicants working within a rehoming environment

Deferred entry Considered

The course is open to anyone currently working or volunteering at a rehoming centre or rescue organisation. The course is direct entry by application to the School of Veterinary Sciences. We do not accept applications for this course through UCAS.

You can download an application form from our website: bristol.ac.uk/vetscience/study/undergraduate/awbr/#apply.

Applications open in February for October entry. All applicants are invited to interview.

Further information

Find out more about the School of Veterinary Sciences: bristol.ac.uk/vetscience.

*The typical offer is indicative only and is correct at the time of printing (June 2015). The University reserves the right to vary its entry requirements. For the most up-to-date information, visit bristol.ac.uk/ug-study.
Contacts

Admissions enquiries
Tel +44 (0)117 331 9320
Email emily.blackwell@bristol.ac.uk

Accommodation Office
Tel +44 (0)117 954 6640
Email accom-office@bristol.ac.uk
bristol.ac.uk/accommodation

Disability Services
Tel +44 (0)117 331 0444
Email disability-services@bristol.ac.uk
bristol.ac.uk/disability-services

International Advice and Support
Tel +44 (0)117 331 8572
Email os-as@bristol.ac.uk
bristol.ac.uk/international-office

Student Funding Office
Tel +44 (0)117 331 7972
Email student-funding@bristol.ac.uk
bristol.ac.uk/fees-funding

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