



Professional Credential – Assistance Animal Trainer – Graduation Requirements (Summary)

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The WAFA-Certified Assistance Animal Trainer (WAFA-AAT) credential formally recognises professionals who demonstrate expertise, ethical practice, and inclusive skills in training and supporting assistance animal teams—particularly those serving people with disabilities, neurodivergence, and complex health needs. This credential ensures nationally consistent standards in animal welfare, safety, and human-centred care.

During the recommended 12-month enrolment period in the WAFA-AAT credential program, you will be required to complete a range of rigorous requirements designed to prepare you for professional excellence. The following is a summary of some key components you will undertake; additional requirements apply as part of the full credentialing process:

Mandatory Foundational Training

All applicants must successfully complete nationally recognised or endorsed courses essential for trauma-informed, inclusive, and ethical practice. Key trainings include:

- **Child Protection and Safeguarding:** Understanding and implementing safe environments for children and young people.
- **Detection of Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation:** Skills to recognise and respond appropriately to signs of harm or vulnerability in clients.
- **Animal Abuse Recognition and Reporting:** Knowledge of animal welfare laws, recognising signs of abuse or neglect, and legal responsibilities for reporting.

Comprehensive Curriculum & Competencies

The WAFA-AAT credential program covers an extensive curriculum designed to prepare trainers for the complexities of assistance animal work:

- **Theory Modules:** In-depth study of disability diversity and inclusion, foundational assistance animal work, learning theory and ethical frameworks, canine welfare and enrichment, collaborative coaching techniques, legal and safeguarding responsibilities, crisis and risk management, business practices aligned with the NDIS, digital literacy for remote coaching, public access rights and advocacy, interfacing with community and health systems, and professional growth and leadership development.
- **Practical Skills:** Candidates must complete a minimum of 400 hours of supervised or independently logged practical experience with assistance animals, demonstrating competence in:
 - Assessing and selecting suitable assistance animal candidates based on behaviour and suitability.
 - Correctly fitting and adjusting training equipment tailored to animal and handler needs.
 - Systematic socialisation and public exposure to diverse environments and stimuli.
 - Teaching foundational obedience and advanced, complex assistance tasks.

- Conditioning animals for cooperative care and husbandry routines essential to welfare.
- Coaching and supporting handlers to independently train and maintain their assistance animals, with adaptations for diverse cognitive and communication needs.
- **Reflective Portfolio:** Submission of at least five de-identified case studies illustrating practical application of knowledge, ethical decision-making, and collaboration with allied health or support professionals. At least one case study must involve a client engaged in the NDIS process.

Professional Practice & Documentation Development

Candidates are required to develop or refine a comprehensive suite of professional documents to ensure safe, ethical, and effective practice, including:

- **Policy and Procedure Manual:** Covering safeguarding, abuse prevention, animal welfare, ethical business practices, workplace health and safety (WHS), venue risk assessments, client intake and assessment, fee schedules, incident reporting, data privacy, and emergency procedures.
- **Animal Husbandry Manual:** Detailing standards for nutrition, housing, enrichment, veterinary care, and infection control.
- **Forms and Templates:** Including hazard and incident reports, media and privacy consent, veterinary emergency authorisations, and training progress checklists.
- **Education Manual:** A guide for handlers outlining humane training methodologies, behaviour modification strategies, and welfare-focused enrichment activities.
- **Intake Assessment Template:** Comprehensive client intake form gathering personal context, disability and support needs, funding arrangements (e.g., NDIS plans), and contingency plans for animal care during handler absence.
- **Personal Statement and Ethics Pledge:** Candidates will articulate their Scope of Practice, defining authorized activities and professional boundaries, alongside a Personal Ethics and Welfare Pledge affirming their commitment to humane, respectful, and ethical practice.

Qualifications

Applicants must have completed the following units of competency to be eligible for graduation from the WAFA Professional Credential program. If these units were not included in your original qualification, you must complete them separately as individual Statements of Attainment or Skillsets by the time of graduation:

- Assess Prospective Handler's Suitability for an Assistance Dog (ACMADT401)
- Select Appropriate Equipment for an Assistance Dog and Handler (ACMADT301)

- Instruct Handlers with Disability to Train Assistance Dogs (ACMADT402)
- Plan and Conduct Assistance Dog Training in Specific and Complex Tasks (ACMADT501)
- Train Dogs Using Operant and Classical Conditioning Techniques (ACMADT403)

Completion of these units is mandatory to ensure the necessary specialised skills and competencies required for professional assistance animal training practice.

Trainer's Declaration

All WAFA-AAT credential holders formally commit to:

- Respecting the autonomy, dignity, and rights of handlers.
- Upholding strict confidentiality and professional conduct standards.
- Confirming a clean history free from animal cruelty investigations or relevant criminal offences.
- Maintaining all required professional clearances, insurances, and ongoing professional development.
- Participating in supervision and ethical conduct reviews as needed.

Application & Credentialing Process

- **References:** Applicants must provide at least five professional or personal references, including endorsements from a veterinarian, peer trainer or supervisor, client (handler or support worker), allied health professional, and one personal referee such as a mentor or community leader.
- **Portfolio Review:** The WAFA Steering Committee will review submissions within 28 days. Upon approval, applicants will be publicly listed for seven days to ensure transparency and community feedback before final credential confirmation.
- **Credential Issuance:** Successful applicants receive official graduation certificates, digital badges, WAFA ID cards, and inclusion in the WAFA Credentialed Trainers Directory.

Benefits & Opportunities

WAFA-AAT credential holders enjoy a broad range of exclusive benefits designed to support career growth and sector leadership, including:

- Use of the WAFA-AAT post-nominal letters and professional branding assets.
- Access to a national network of ethical, inclusive, and welfare-centred assistance animal trainers.
- Priority invitations to advanced training programs, masterclasses, assessor credentials (e.g., PAT Assessor), and leadership forums.

- Participation opportunities in national conferences, expos, policy development, and advocacy initiatives.
- Business support including insurance guidance, marketing resources, and operational consultancy.
- Early access to new WAFA pilot programs, curriculum trials, and sector research projects.
- Eligibility for awards, scholarships, grants, and sector outreach programs.

Additional benefits and resources are continually being developed to enhance the value and impact of the WAFA-AAT credential.

Important Note

The WAFA-AAT credential is rigorous and demanding, designed for trainers committed to high ethical standards, welfare-centred practice, and continual professional growth. Prospective applicants should carefully consider their readiness before applying. WAFA supports inclusion for people with disability, offering reasonable adjustments.

Document Control

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V1.0	23/07/2025	V. Solomon	Initial	C.Williams