

Academy GDMS: FAQ

Thinking of applying for the Academy Guide Dog Mobility Specialist (GDMS) role but have questions? We asked our current Academy team what kind of questions they had when they were considering applying and the answers below, but if you have a query that we've not covered, please contact GDAcademy@guidedogs.org.uk.

You can also find more information on our [Guide Dogs Academy pages](#), [careers pages](#) and [careers FAQ](#).

What is the difference between a Guide Dog Trainer and a Guide Dog Mobility Specialist?

Our Guide Dog Trainers train guide dogs so that they can go on to support a person with sight loss. Our Guide Dog Mobility Specialists deliver a safe and efficient guide dog service, as well as training guide dogs. This includes providing specialist advice, coaching and support to people with sight loss, so they become confident in their guide dog partnership.

What does the role involve?

There is no-one better placed to tell you about the role than someone who is currently doing it - here's current Guide Dog Mobility Specialist, Natalie, to tell you about her experience and why she loves her role!



Date: May 2022

What are you looking for?

We need people who are keen to be heads-on, hearts on and hands on! This is a unique role - you'll be learning how to create a life-changing partnership between a person with sight loss and one of our wonderful dogs! We're looking for people with a determined and positive mindset who has a passion for supporting and empowering people - and of course, you also need to love dogs! You'll be active, professional, and committed to providing the best service to our service users. We take your professional development seriously and you'll be working with world-leaders in the dog behaviour space, so be prepared to learn and add to your current skills!

How much physical activity does the role involve?

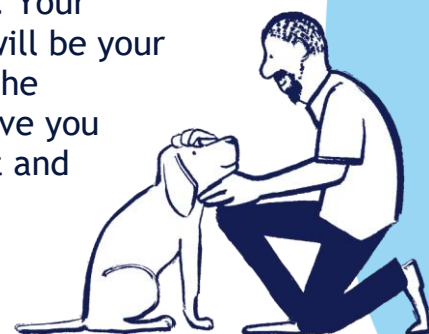
It's a pretty active role! No two days are the same within the Academy, but most days do require a large amount of walking. On average, our current teams complete around 8,000-10,000 steps per day - whether that's in our centres, out on training walks with fellow learners, or engaging in active lessons within the training rooms themselves.

What training will be provided?

This role provides full training to enable you to go on to qualify as a Guide Dog Mobility Specialist when the training has been completed, and the International Guide Dog Federation requirements met. Our guide dogs work in a unique way, so we provide full training in our bespoke canine training methodologies, including how we use positive reinforcement training and how that's implemented to teach our dog the full skill set they will need in their working lives.

Does the role involve any hybrid working?

This role is based at your local centre, and does not include any home-working. You will be part of a small cohort of learners working through the training cycles together - you'll need to be hands on and support each other. Your Technical Learning Specialist will be available each day and will be your first port of call for queries and advice as you move through the programme, but your fellow learners will also be around to give you support and encouragement too. You're often likely to be out and about, working both on and off-site, in order to socialise and



Date: May 2022



train dogs in a variety of settings such as parks, supermarkets, and on public transport.

Will I be provided with a uniform?

Yes, we provide all our Academy staff with appropriate uniform to do their role - in all weathers and for the full working week! This includes a high quality outdoor coat along with all required dog training equipment. We never ask our staff to contribute towards the cost of their uniform, although you can buy more uniform if you wish to. The only thing you need to provide is suitable footwear.

Why is a driving licence essential?

Although the role is site-based, there is a substantial amount of local travel required with both learners and dogs. Although we use public transport as much as possible, there are times when we need to use our own vans and vehicles, so we ask that all our TLSs and learners are able to drive.

What transport will I be using?

As part of your role, you will be driving a van suitable for transporting up to four dogs and up to four people. You don't need any prior experience of driving vans as we will provide all the training.

What happens to the dogs when they aren't in training?

Our training dogs love coming to 'school' during the day, but during the evenings and weekends they enjoy their down-time staying with our volunteer Fosterers - local volunteers who have the dogs at evenings and weekends, and who provide them with a calm and loving home environment where they can rest, recharge, and absorb everything they've been learning in their training. You can find out more about our Fosterers on our [website](#).

When do you recruit learners?

We recruit learners to our local teams at different times throughout the year. When you have completed your own induction and



Date: May 2022



training and are feeling confident to support learners, we will recruit up to four learners as a cohort to enable them to engage in a shared, supportive learning journey.

Next steps..

Sound interesting? Then let's continue the conversation. You can get in touch with us by GDAcademy@guidedogs.org.uk or by going to our [careers pages](#). We are always happy to answer any further questions, talk you through the role in more detail, or arrange for you to chat with one of our Academy learners or Technical Learning Specialists to get the inside track on what it's really like! Our Academy is a great team, so if you'd like to join us, please reach out.

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Date: May 2022

Guide Dogs is a working name of The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. Registered Office: Hillfields, Burghfield Common, Reading, Berkshire, RG7 3YG. A company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (291646) and a charity registered in England and Wales (209617) and Scotland (SC038979).