

Queen Margaret University's Therapet dog Rocco is a hit with students



Rocco, a young labradoodle, is the first full-time Therapet dog placed at a Scottish University. Aged two years, the black Labrador/Poodle cross, is fulfilling his recent role as a student stress-buster at Queen Margaret University's Student Union (QMUSU) in Edinburgh.

Rocco is part of Canine Concern Scotland Trust's Therapet Visiting Service and has been specially assessed by the charity for this role. His owner, Kirsten Baird, General Manager of Queen Margaret University Students' Union, has been working hard on Rocco's training and socialising him on a daily basis.

She said: "The Students Union has run several 'Therapet' sessions over the last few years which students really seemed to benefit from. Rocco came with me to work almost every day and the students all seemed to love him. So it made sense to train him as an official 'Therapet' which would allow QMU students more regular access to organised sessions."

She continued: "He is proving to be a huge hit with students, particularly during stressful periods around exams and assignments. Many students miss their own pets from home and often enjoy the opportunity to be with Rocco.

'Therapet' dogs come in all sizes and breeds and are approved for having a steady and friendly temperament. They are very stable and have calm and friendly personas. They must be at least one year old before becoming a 'Therapet', but their most important attribute is to bring comfort and happiness to

people who need it the most.

Canine Concern Scotland Trust firmly believes in the therapeutic value that dogs can offer people who may not have regular access to them.

Simon Young, from Canine Concern Scotland Trust, explained: "The charity promotes responsible dog ownership in Scotland and manages the Therapet Visiting Service which sees dogs visiting different types of establishments all over the country, such as care homes, hospitals and hospices."

The service has proved so popular that demand has outstripped supply. Simon Young said: "We are always looking for more volunteers to register their dogs or cats and become members. We are incredibly grateful to our volunteers who give up their time to deliver the Therapet Visiting Service and to our supporters who sustain our work through essential fundraising."

Maj Meah, a 4th year student at QMU who is studying a BA (Hons) Public Relations and Media, has attended several Therapet sessions at the Students' Union. He said: "Everyone loves Rocco and the students now associate him with their visits to the Students' Union. He's a fun dog to have around and is proving to be a great stress-buster and companion for many students at QMU."

Caitlin Lewis-Ogden, a BA (Hons) Costume Design and Construction student at QMU, said: "I am not able to care for a dog full time at this point, but having the opportunity to spend time with Rocco on occasion has been really lovely."

Kirsten Baird concluded: "The Therapet Visiting Service offers a win-win to all concerned. It's great for the dog – who relishes the opportunity to give love and receive attention – and to the pet owners who get a feeling of satisfaction knowing their beloved animal is helping others. It's also nice

to know Queen Margaret University's Students' Union is leading the way with the introduction of the first full-time Therapet at a Scottish university. It's great for all of our animal loving students who lap up every minute of their time with Rocco, and for our Students' Union.