

International Programme for Applied Canine Studies (IPACS)

Understanding Real-Life Skills



- Innovative
- Dynamic
- Hands-on
- Holistic
- Ethical

IPACS Prospectus 2020 - 21

International Programme for Applied Canine Studies

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The International Programme for Applied Canine Study is a professional, well established, accredited course, fulfilling the demand for an in-depth, internationally recognised course appealing to professionals and pet owners.

Why Choose the IPACS?

Through attending the IPACS you will gain insight into how dogs communicate, an understanding of canine development, behaviour and psychology along opportunities to apply what you learn practically in real world situations.

Whether you wish to have a better relationship with your dog, gain tools for overcoming problem behaviour; whether you are active in handling dogs on a daily basis, or wish to work towards a more professional approach to teaching or behaviour counselling, this course will give you sound information to help you achieve your goals, along with the opportunity to gain independent accreditation.

This is an innovative, unique course which is widely recognised as giving students a sound basis in applied canine behaviour.

Although dog-related courses are widely available, behaviour is often dealt with theoretically or through correspondence courses; few address the implementation of practical skills in any detail. Many continue to advocate out-dated methods. Huge advances have been made in animal behaviour and psychology in recent years, including the understanding of the links between body and mind, physical and mental health.

The whole approach of IPACS is unlike any other: it is an up-to-date, applied educational programme which has at its core, not the method, nor what the trainer or behaviourist “wants”, but the needs and individuality of each dog and owner. Too often an attempt is made to use quick fixes to deal with individual problem behaviours, rather than looking at the bigger picture, understanding the dog and addressing the root cause.

Although we value the science behind many modern trends in behaviour and training, we encourage students to be critical. We encourage an observational and evidential approach in order to question conventional and traditional attitudes towards dogs. Our work with dogs involves the application of sound, logical and empathetic principles in canine behaviour and psychology, taking an adaptive approach in order to meet the needs of the individual.

Real Life Skills

One of our unique features is that we help handlers and dogs to develop skills. These are skills for real life: genuine skills that dogs and their handlers need to be able to live more harmoniously within both canine and human societies. Key concepts include awareness, analysis and competence.



Unfortunately, there is a current trend to interpret the term Life Skills in a way that translates into a modified form of conventional training. It is a step in the right direction to identify skills and in doing so move away from repetitive exercises. However, there is still a very great tendency to continue society's myth that dogs should deal with absolutely everything that life throws at them no matter what their ability may be, and to learn superficial behaviours that cover over the gaps.



Our view is that through understanding, identifying and teaching skills relevant to the individual's character and emotional, psychological and environmental circumstances, the true potential of the individual will develop more quickly. We have distinguished our concept of Life Skills from others by the addition of the word "Real": the skills that both dog and owner need for themselves and that are realistic for the individual.

The beauty of what we do is in its simplicity. Understanding the basics of key human skills such as awareness and handling along with key concepts can empower owners to make a difference in every aspect of daily life.

The IPACS is best known for its unique practical approach to handling and canine behaviour. However, theoretical aspects of behaviour and psychology form the basis before practical work is undertaken. It is a multi-disciplinary course normally taken over an 18-month period, leading to an in-house certificate of attendance.

Upon completion of the IPACS, students wishing to work towards a formally recognised Open College Network (WMR) accreditation may then attend four intensive two-day study blocks at extra cost. Submission of a portfolio is required based upon the content of the IPACS course which is then assessed by an independent, impartial body. This is intended to address the demand for a course nationally recognised in the UK that also has standards that are identifiable within other EU countries.

For further information about OCN accreditation, please contact us at info@sheilaharper.co.uk

The IPACS Programme

The course consists of 10 areas of study, each comprising 4 days (approximately one block every two months). The first three areas of study are mandatory before further areas of study can be attended.

Programme of Study

Area 1: Body Language and Communication

(Study type: Theoretical bias)

- Canine observation, body language and communication
- Understanding the escalation towards signs of fear, defence and 'aggression'
- An introduction to ethology and instincts

Area 2: Life Balance

(Study type: Theoretical bias)

- The physiology of stress
- Recognition and causes of health and behaviour issues
- Influences on physical and mental health
- Steps towards life balance

Area 3: Practical handling skills

(Study type: Practical bias)

- General handling and dog / handler awareness
- Mechanics of lead handling
- Mutual influence between handler and dog
- Impact and use of environment

Area 4: Relationships and Natural Abilities

(Study type: Practical bias)

- The dog's senses
- The dog's viewpoint. Life rewards
- Confidence building, creativity and self-control
- Nose work, mental stimulation and problem solving
- Building relationships

Area 5: The Holistic Approach

(Study type: Theoretical and Practical)

- Assessing dogs
- Movement, nutrition, health issues
- Complementary Health
- Handling for administering therapies and general care

Area 6: Learning Principles

(Study type: mixed, practical with case studies)

- Questioning and critical evaluation of the purpose of performance training and training behavioural responses
- Practical applications of some aspects of basic learning theory where appropriate; understanding rewards, their use and abuse
- Introduction to case studies, taking case histories and their systematic evaluation
- Counselling skills and information gathering

Area 7: Life Stages

(Study type: mixed, practical with case studies)

- The role of the breeder
- Social and behavioural development
- Associated issues
- Puppies, adolescents, mature dogs and older dogs
- Understanding of quality habituation and socialisation

Area 8: Teaching Life Skills

(Study type: mixed, practical with case studies)

- Teaching and people skills
- Curriculum content
- Planning and running classes, expectations and compromise
- Needs of dog and owner

Area 9: Behaviour Problems

(Study type: mixed, practical with case studies)

- Causes, indications and consequences of behaviour problems
- First steps towards solving problems
- Canine skills for conflict solving
- Behaviour modification and the holistic approach
- Therapy and rehabilitation

Area 10: Handling Skills and Real Life Skills Walks

(Study type: practical)

- Stopping techniques
- Handling for problem solving
- Recognising and knowing how to support a dog with a tendency towards defensive ("aggressive") behaviours
- An introduction to handling for supporting social skill development

This is the proposed outline of the course; however, the sequence may be flexible with changes made at our discretion.

To complete the whole course, students must attend each area of study. There may be opportunities to catch up with missed areas of study at a later date.

Practical Work

Practical work includes observation, discussion, group and pair work, handling skills, teaching to improve behaviour, planning for teaching and altering behaviour, and problem solving. The first two areas of work will mainly involve observation and assessment of dogs, and as the course progresses there will be opportunity for behavioural teaching. The handling and natural abilities blocks are devoted almost entirely to 'hands-on' work with dogs.

Handling incorporates a vast number of skills, amongst these being:

- General handling skills and lead work
- Activities for a balanced lifestyle: Gentle activities to encourage freedom of choice and non-prescriptive problem solving through nosework
- Building relationships
- Effective intervention and splitting up
- Walks for **quality** socialisation: taking a step towards developing good social skills
- Practical stress reduction skills
- Dealing with undesirable influences in a social environment
- Applied behavioural teaching

The main aims of the programme are to get students to develop awareness, to think for themselves, to assess their dogs, to question and analyse, to be logical and critical and to work on the premise that each dog, each situation and each scenario is different.

Applied Practical Work: Case Studies

This course is unique in its approach to practical work. In addition to handling, each student is given the opportunity to offer their dog as a case study with an in-depth behavioural / teaching review based on their needs and those of their dog. This is an excellent way of acquiring hands on experience and working as a group to problem solve, plan and review. Working in this way gives each student the security to know that their dog is seen as an individual whose needs will be of paramount importance.

Each case study requires a unique approach and is given individual attention. As a result, students have an opportunity to understand and work with other individuals, giving a wider experience, opportunities for observation and assessment, enabling each student to practise information gathering and group counselling along with planning programmes of behaviour and teaching, working through issues and offering support. This gives each student the opportunity to not only to receive, but also to support, ensuring practical knowledge and experience is gained.

Case study work is led and guided by the course tutors with students working in groups to give the best possible care and practical help. As skills improve during the course, responsibility is gradually given over to each group, ensuring that students have every opportunity to complete real, valuable work.

Course Tutors

Sheila Harper B.Ed, BA

Sheila has a vast amount of handling and behavioural experience and theoretical knowledge, working with dogs in a professional capacity since the late 1980s.

Having taught in a middle school for over 20 years, Sheila set up her own company to work full time with dogs in 2002.



An international speaker, teaching extensively in a variety of countries, Sheila reaches audiences worldwide.

In addition to teaching seminars and workshops, she keeps her feet on the ground in the “real world” by working with local owners and their dogs on a practical basis.



Winy Boerman B.App.Sc

Winy is highly skilled in all aspects of practical work with dogs, and in-depth behavioural analysis.

Formerly a research analyst in molecular biology, Winy is also qualified as a Veterinary Nurse. She has been involved with dogs for more than 30 years, working in rescue shelters and spending several years as a shelter manager.



Winy's interests are in handling, problem solving and working with natural abilities. She encourages dogs to regain their social skills through quality socialisation, handling and real life skills in order to help them better deal with society's demands.

Sheila and Winy are currently involved in delivering the ISPACS, a high quality, in-depth “sister” course to the IPACS, specifically for rescue shelter staff. At present, the Sheffield branch of the RSPCA is engaged in learning with us through this course. Several shelters in Europe have already benefitted from this programme.



International Programme for Applied Canine Studies

Tuition

- Group PowerPoint presentations
- Group, team and paired discussion
- Individual coaching during practical work
- Group, team and individual help with case studies
- Handouts
- Suggested reading list
- Personal approach, flexibility to deal with requests and to meet individual student's needs

Venues for the IPACS

Sessions in the UK are based in venues around Cannock Chase AONB near Rugeley, Staffordshire, which provides endless walking and interesting physical and mental enrichment for dogs.

We mostly use a comfortable venue situated on the edge of Cannock Chase, the Gatehouse, Staffordshire Wildlife Centre, Wolseley Bridge, near Rugeley. Set in 26 acres of wildlife-friendly grounds, this venue provides shady parking with dog walks (on lead) directly from the car.



Practical sessions normally take place on Cannock Chase, providing a range of beautiful spots to visit, with a variety of woodland and heathland.

Taster days

We do our best to offer taster days that represent the kind of experience you would generally expect to have on our course. Please contact us to find out when the next one will be held.