

Volunteering Policy

January 2016

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide overall guidance to students engaged in volunteering activity and volunteer management. The policy is intended for guidance only and does not constitute either implicitly or explicitly a binding contractual agreement. This policy highlights the importance of volunteers to Solent Students' Union, explains how to access volunteering opportunities and the rights you have as a volunteer. It is designed to ensure that the time and enthusiasm given by volunteers is recognised, supported and valued, and that volunteering partnerships benefit all parties.
- 1.2 Volunteering is defined as 'any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment, animals or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives' (Source: Compact Volunteering, A Code of Practice, 2005, p 4).
- 1.3 Solent Students' Union has a mission to enrich the student experience through opportunities, support, influence and action. To achieve this mission we are committed to providing students with opportunities to lead, apply, learn and collaborate as well as cultivating safe social spaces and fun activities. Volunteering is one of the ways we are actively achieving this mission. A wide range of volunteering opportunities are available at www.solentsu.co.uk/volunteering/, from the Student Involvement Office or from www.facebook.com/vsolent. If students cannot find a volunteering opportunity that interests them, they can approach the Activities Coordinator for support in developing an alternative opportunity.
- 1.4 Volunteering provides students with valuable skills, knowledge and experience which cannot be achieved from an academic degree alone, increasing employability. The Students' Union provides students with volunteering opportunities to allow them to:
- Meet new people;
 - Follow their interest;
 - Increase their employability;
 - Support causes they care about;
 - Enhance their student experience;
 - Make a difference to the local community; and to,
 - Gain new experiences and develop their skills.
- 1.5 Volunteers are issued with Volunteer Agreements which outline what they can expect from the Students' Union as a valued volunteer, and what the Students' Union reasonable expects in return from them. Volunteers will not be expected to undertake tasks they do not feel comfortable with, or be asked to give more time than they feel able to. If they feel that pressure is being placed on them to undertake tasks they do not feel comfortable with, then they should approach the appropriate member of support staff within the Students' Union. Volunteers are expected to act responsibly and take reasonable care to ensure that their own safety and the safety of others are not at risk whilst undertaking voluntary duties.
- 1.6 Volunteers will be expected to undertake the relevant training needed for their role; work within the Union's values and visions; be polite, professional and inclusive to those who work within and receive a service from the Students' Union; complete the relevant feedback and monitoring forms; comply with the relevant policies and procedures highlighted to them in their training. If a volunteer is unable to continue their volunteering or will be absent from volunteering for a significant period of time they should make their supervisor or the Activities Coordinator aware of this as soon as practical.

2. Recruitment and Selection

- 2.1 Prior to recruitment it should be made clear why a volunteer is wanted for a role. A role description should be made available and should include an outline of duties, training requirements, support provided and any restrictions affecting who can take on the role.

Volunteers shall be recruited without regard to any distinction that may be viewed as discriminatory. The Students' Union has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy which should be viewed in partnership with the Student Volunteering policy.

Volunteers shall be recruited proactively through the Solent Students' Union website, posters, internal press, events and social media, and will be assisted in finding volunteering roles that will best meet their skills, knowledge and interests.

- 2.2 Students may be required to complete an application form, stand in an election, attend an interview, provide references, attend a selection meeting and attend specific training before being recruited. The specific process will be decided on an individual basis, dependent upon the nature of the project and the role of the volunteer.

Where a volunteering opportunity has limited places, a selection criteria based on the role description will determine which applicants are most suitable to the role. Any unsuccessful applicants will be entitled to feedback on request and will be supported in finding alternative volunteering opportunities.

- 2.3 The Students' Union has a duty of care to protect its volunteers. This duty is upheld in the use of role descriptions, selection criteria and in following the Union's Safeguarding Policy.

Where volunteers will be working with vulnerable adults and/or with young people under the age of 18, references may be requested from applicants. They are required to have known these referees for two years or more and they must not be a friend or relative of the applicant. In some circumstances volunteers may not be able to participate in their desired activity until references are processed.

Volunteers working with vulnerable service users will be required to complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. In some circumstances volunteers may not be able to participate in their desired activity until this form has been processed.

Volunteers with a criminal conviction will not be considered automatically unsuitable for the role they are applying for. As only a small number of convictions would prevent a volunteer from being unsuitable for volunteering and this will be considered on an individual basis.

3. Training and Support

- 3.1 The Students' Union believes that training is a very important aspect of our work and recognises that volunteers are more confident and effective when given appropriate training. As such, volunteers will be expected to attend any training specified in the role description which may include information on health and safety or other policies, procedures or support for a specific issue.

Students' Union staff will seek to ensure that, either through the Students' Union or the groups(s) with whom volunteers are working with, students receive adequate training for the specific tasks they have been asked to perform.

4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 4.1 Solent Students' Union is committed to encouraging a community in which all individuals may contribute as fully as they choose without fear of unfair or discriminatory attitudes and practices. The Students' Union has a Student EDI policy which exists to ensure we are proactively ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion for all our members. This policy can be found on the SU website, www.solentsu.co.uk

All volunteers will be asked to sign a volunteering agreement and encouraged to complete an Equality and Diversity form when they commence a new volunteering opportunity. This will allow the Union to ensure that a broad range of opportunities are always available to suit the motivations and interests of our members.

5. Data Protection and Confidentiality

- 5.1 In accordance with the Data Protection Act, information collected through the recruitment process will be used to ensure it is as diverse and accessible as possible. Volunteers have the right not to disclose information that is not essential to their volunteering placement (e.g. equal opportunities monitoring information).

In supporting volunteers, Solent Students' Union will also need to collect personal data relating to individuals' contact details. Only data that is relevant to the volunteering opportunity is required to be collected and access to this data is restricted to the Activities Coordinator, Administrator, Student Involvement Manager and the Chief Executive. Personal details will never be passed to any other party without permission from the volunteer.

Under Section 7 of the Data Protection Act, volunteers have the right to view all personal information held about them by the Students' Union. Volunteers can request to do so by submitting their request in writing to the Activities Coordinator by email or post. Volunteers may be asked to provide proof of their identity in the form of their student card.

6. Insurance, Health and Safety

- 6.1 Solent Students' Union has Employers' Liability and Public Liability Insurance which covers normal activities carried out by volunteers. For any unusual activities further insurance may be required and arrangements will be made if reasonable. Any exceptions to this should be communicated to all involved in those activities prior to the activity taking place.

The Students' Union's current insurance will protect you as a member should you suffer injury or sustain damage to your property which is a result of the Union's negligence. Likewise, should a member of the public allege injury to themselves or damage to their property as a result of normal volunteering activities, the insurance will protect you as a member against any allegations made providing you act in accordance with the Students' Union's guidelines and policies.

- 6.2 The Students' Union expects volunteers to co-operate with those responsible for the activity in order to ensure a healthy and safe working environment for themselves and others. Individuals are required to abide by the rules and requirements of the Student Groups Code of Conduct Policy to ensure that they and others do not harm whilst carrying out their roles. This may include the following:
- Volunteers have the responsibility to do everything they can to prevent injury to themselves, fellow volunteers and others affected by their actions or omissions while volunteering;

- Volunteers must report any unsafe conditions or activities to the Activities Coordinator or to their supervisor, and report **ANY** accidents or near misses;
- Volunteers must make full use of any protective clothing or equipment supplied to ensure safer working conditions and must not undertake any task for which authorisation and/or training has not been given; and,
- Volunteers must seek the advice of the Activities Coordinator with reference to any special medical or other conditions which may affect the safe working of the individual.

7. Expenses

- 7.1 The Students' Union aims to ensure volunteering activity is accessible and as part of this that volunteering activity should not incur any costs to students. This outlook concerns in-house and student-led opportunities only and does not concern opportunities that are offered by external organisations.
- 7.2 If you think you may incur an expense whilst volunteering with the Students' Union you should contact the Activities Coordinator before spending any money. If you need to claim expenses you will be required to complete a Volunteer Expenses Form which are available from the Activities Coordinator, and provide evidence of all receipts.
- 7.3 Volunteering opportunities undertaken with an external organisation should be covered by the expenses policy of that organisation. If a student is embarking on a volunteering opportunity with an external organisation which has not been pre-arranged by the Students' Union, it is their own responsibility to ensure the external organisation covers the cost of volunteers' expenses.
- 7.4 For specific information on expenses, students are advised to contact the Activities Coordinator or the Student Involvement Manager.

8. Grievances and Complaints

- 8.1 Solent Students' Union is committed to identifying and assisting in the solving of problems at the earliest possible stage and will help to resolve any issues that may arise as a result of volunteering with the Students' Union or with any organisation a student is volunteering with.

If a volunteer wishes to complain about the behaviour of another individual or organisation, they are encouraged to follow the guidelines set out in the Students' Union's Student Complaints Procedure, contacting a member of staff at the earliest opportunity.

- 8.2 Volunteers are expected to abide by the Student Groups Code of Conduct which states that the following actions may lead to the instigation of disciplinary procedures (as laid out in the Student Disciplinary Policy & Procedure):
- Conduct which constitutes a criminal offence (e.g. assault, theft, fraud, deceit, deception or dishonesty);
 - Violent, indecent, disorderly, threatening, intimidating or offensive behaviour or language;
 - Sexual, racial or any other form of harassment;
 - Misuse, misappropriation, theft or damage of property;
 - Action, likely to cause injury or to impair Health and Safety procedures;
 - Failure to respect the rights of others to freedom of belief and freedom of speech;
 - Behaviour which brings the Union or University into disrepute (e.g. such as conduct as abusive, antisocial or discourteous behaviour, inconsiderate noise, disregarding the

Highway Code, causing litter and especially criminal damage to private property, highway signs or vehicles);

- Disruption of or interference with the academic, administrative, sporting, social or other activities of the University;
- Obstruction of or interference with, the functions, duties or activities of any student, member of staff, or visitor of the University; and,
- Misuse or unauthorised use of University premises.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually in response to any legal or other developments in this area.

Date of last policy review: January 2016

Date of next review: April 2017