



London Metropolitan University
Students' Union

London Metropolitan University Students' Union Volunteer Policy

1. Values

The Students' Union values the involvement of volunteers in our work because they help reflect the interests, needs and resources of the student community we aim to serve and bring a unique perspective on all our work.

The Union recognises volunteers as a core part of our team, with a distinctive but complementary role alongside paid staff. The Union benefits from the skills, experience and enthusiasm of volunteers; we believe that volunteers should be able to gain personal benefits from the experience too. We are committed to managing volunteers in a way that ensures that the needs of both parties are met.

The Union strives to create a diverse and inclusive organisation that represents the students. Therefore, we are committed to ensuring equality of access to high quality volunteer opportunities and equality of treatment for our volunteers in all our policies and practices.

Responsible and Accountable
Fair and Representative
Supportive and Respectful
Ambitious and Excellent
Diverse and Equitable
Hardworking and Committed

2. Types and Roles

Volunteer activity is defined as:

'An activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives.'

Source: Compact 'Volunteering, a code of practice.'

Most volunteer projects and groups are student-led with support from Union staff. Below is a list of the Students' Union areas which incorporate volunteering*:

Course Reps
Green Impact
Media Volunteers
Society Committee role
Students' Council
Trustee
Team Sports Committee role
Students' Union election candidates

The Union identifies roles for volunteers which extend the work of the organisation. Volunteers are involved at every level of the organisation in roles which complement, but never substitute, the work of paid staff.

*The range of volunteering roles within the Union is fluid and this list will be regularly reviewed by the Union to reflect any changes in volunteering roles.

3. Recruitment

A variety of methods are used to recruit volunteers, these include:

Fairs

At the start of every academic year the Union currently hold student fairs. Each group/club/society will be given the opportunity to be represented by a stall where students can sign up and register their interest.

Website;

Volunteer opportunities are advertised and promoted on the Union's website.

Posters/Flyers

Posters will be distributed in targeted areas across the Union and the wider campus.

Presentations

Union officers and staff deliver talks and presentations to students at the beginning of each year with the aim of recruiting a wide range of students. These talks promote the variety of activities that students can get involved with.

Word of mouth

Volunteering is often recommended through the previous experience of volunteers.

Emails

The SU email students promoting various volunteering projects and events.

Students' Union Guide

A guide is published annually which highlights some of the key volunteering opportunities

Verve Magazine

Articles will appear on a regular basis to raise the profile of voluntary work. The magazine itself is produced by volunteers.

Social network sites

A number of Facebook and Twitter sites are set up to promote volunteering opportunities

Selection and Screening

The selection and screening method will depend on what level of responsibility the role will entail. Some roles will require an interview, some will require a members voting system, some will require simply to join the specific group. All volunteers will be informed on what the particular process of selection will be.

Application Procedure

Prospective volunteers are expected to follow the advertised application process which differs across Union areas and this will include the selection procedure. Many of our voluntary positions are elected from either the whole membership or a selection of the membership. The Union will publicise the rules for these elections in many formats and will actively seek candidates from underrepresented groups. Our other positions are through selection procedures which seek to match skills to positions. Feedback to unsuccessful candidates is offered for all roles that go through a selection process.

Interviews/Selection

Some projects will require volunteers to go through an informal interview process to assess whether they are suitable for the role.

Safeguarding

We are committed to the safety of our volunteers and service users. All projects and activities organised by the Union will be referred to a senior manager of the Union who will consider the safeguarding implications after seeking advice from appropriate agencies. This will especially be the case if the project involves young people or vulnerable adults which may impact of recruitment and selection process and require appropriate clearance to be obtained

References

References will usually be requested where volunteers are working with vulnerable adults (as per the University definition*) and/or with young people (under 18). They are required to have known these referees for two years or more. The referees must not be family members or personal friends. A formatted reference form and cover letter are sent to all referees.

The University defines a vulnerable adult as a person over the age of eighteen who is, or may be in need of, community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age, or illness; and who is unable to take care of himself or herself, or unable to protect himself against significant harm or exploitation.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

All volunteers working with vulnerable service users in roles recruited through a selection process will be required to complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) form. This will be highlighted at the start of any selection process.

Prospective volunteers with a criminal conviction

Volunteers with a criminal conviction are not automatically unsuitable to become a volunteer as only a small number of convictions would prevent a volunteer from involvement. The decision of taking on a volunteer with a criminal record is made on the basis of the law and risk by the member of staff responsible for the recruitment of volunteers in that specific activity with the guidance of the General Manager. Should you wish to appeal an outcome of this process you should write to the Union President within 7 working days.

Role Descriptions

Volunteers are entitled to a clear explanation of the responsibilities and tasks they will be undertaking during a project or activity. Volunteers will not be expected to commit to an activity until they are clear about their obligations. All core volunteer roles will have a role description with an associated 'skills' list. The role descriptions will state whether a DBS check is needed.

Equal Opportunities

The Union's equal opportunities policy will be adhered to at all times during interactions with volunteers and service users.

The Equal Opportunities Policy can be viewed at

<http://www.londonmetsu.org.uk/pageassets/union/documents/ED-Policy.pdf>

4. Induction and Training

Volunteers will be expected to follow the induction and/or training programme for their specific activity. This may include information on health and safety and other policies or procedures and support on specific issues applicable to the role/project/activity.

Union staff will seek to ensure that, either through the Students' Union or the group(s) with whom they are volunteering, volunteers receive adequate training for the specific tasks they have been asked to perform. On-going training will often be available and is sometimes required by volunteering opportunities. The Union will make the requirements clear before volunteers commit to a project.

5. Monitoring and Supervision

The Union endeavours to provide adequate and appropriate facilities, equipment and resources to enable volunteers to fulfil their roles

It is the role of the Sabbatical Officer or member of staff to monitor the welfare of their volunteers, either face to face or via regular emails. Should there be any issues; volunteers have the option to contact their coordinator, Sabbatical Officer, Chair of Committee or staff member.

At the end of each academic year evaluation questionnaires will be given to all volunteers involved in Student' Union volunteering. These are completed anonymously and returned to a designated staff member who has no involvement in the given volunteering group. Once evaluations have been received then project reports will be compiled with conclusions and recommendations for the future

6 Expenses

Reimbursement will be in line with the current policy of the Students' Union.

On occasions volunteers may be asked to attend events in their capacity as a volunteer e.g. BUCS meetings, National Course Rep Forum. On these occasions volunteers will be entitled to be reimbursed in line with the current Union Subsistence Policy. All such requests will have to be approved in advance by the relevant staff member and then returned within 3 months.

All volunteer expenses are covered under the policy as described in the volunteer handbook and Union Volunteer travel policy

7. Volunteer Recognition

Recognition for volunteers comes in the form of structured events - mainly the annual awards event. Volunteers who serve in any capacity are respected and appreciated throughout the Union.

Volunteer managers will use positive reinforcement in supporting their volunteers.

8. Health and Safety

Volunteers with the Union are protected by the organisation's public liability and personal accident insurance providing you adhere to agreed health and safety assessments and regulations. However, drivers using their cars in connection with their voluntary work must inform their own insurance company to ensure adequate and continued cover.

Students' Union has a Health and Safety policy which can be viewed at <http://www.londonmetsu.org.uk/pageassets/union/documents/HS-Policy.pdf>

9. Grievance/Complaints Procedure

While it is hoped that volunteers will be happy in their placements, inevitably problems can arise. A complaint may be made against a volunteer, staff member, Sabbatical Officer or a member of the general public. All complaints will be considered carefully and investigated fully. This policy clarifies the procedure concerning complaints and grievances.

If a satisfactory outcome cannot be reached then the complainant can take action, as he/she feels fit, in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy – please see below.

10. Disciplinary Procedure

In taking up a voluntary position through the Union volunteers accept that they are representing the Union. As such they should conduct themselves so as not to breach the policies, aims and objectives of the Union and University or otherwise bring us into disrepute. Volunteers who breach this undertaking may find themselves having restrictions placed upon their membership as specified in Bye Law of the Union's Constitution or under University student regulations. More details can be found in the Union Volunteer policies on grievance, harassment and misconduct

11. Harassment

The Union recognises that harassment is a serious issue should it occur when volunteering and can affect the confidence of volunteers and enjoyment of the volunteering opportunity. Any volunteer who feels they are being harassed should not accept the situation and should make it clear from the outset that this behaviour is unwelcome.

The volunteer may elect to have the complaint investigated in the full knowledge that the matter will be dealt with seriously, promptly and with the strictest of confidence. More details can be found in the Union Volunteer policies on grievance, harassment and misconduct.

12. Equal Opportunities and Diversity

The Union is committed to serving and representing the whole student population and wishes to see all sections of the student community represented among our volunteers. Volunteer opportunities are widely promoted throughout and we will endeavour to make volunteer materials available in a format accessible to any individual or group, upon request.

Furthermore, the Union regularly reviews the make-up of the volunteer team to identify and target any under-represented group(s). Ultimately the Union aims to recruit volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds and age groups upwards of 18 years of age.

The Union believes in the importance of operating an Equal Opportunities policy and this can be found at

<http://www.londonmetsu.org.uk/pageassets/union/documents/ED-Policy.pdf>

The Union recognises that there is much to gain from diverse cultures and perspectives and that diversity will make the organisation more effective in meeting the needs of its stakeholders.

13. Confidentiality

Volunteers may be in a position where they have access to confidential records and personally sensitive information. It is important to respect these confidences.

Confidentiality means not discussing information outside your placement/project/group. During your time as a volunteer you may have concerns about the information you receive. This should be discussed with a member of staff who supervises your work. This is not a breach of confidentiality and as a volunteer you should feel happy doing this.

Any information, which an individual provides in respect of signing up with the volunteer group, will be treated with the strictest confidence and kept in a secure environment.

14. Volunteer Agreement

A Volunteer agreement will be shared with volunteers electronically. As set out above Please Note: This Volunteer Agreement is not intended to be a legally binding contract or to form any employment relationship. Volunteers should be aware that they can refuse demands they consider unrealistic, beyond the scope of the role or that they do not have the skills to carry out