

London Metropolitan Students' Union - Student Volunteering Policy

1. Introduction

London Metropolitan Students' Union (LMSU) exists to empower students to make the most of their time at London Met and transform their lives for the better. You, our student volunteers, are a crucial part of making that happen, and we are committed to providing high quality, well-supported volunteering opportunities that are accessible to all sections of our diverse student body. This policy aims to demonstrate LMSU's commitment to our volunteers by setting out how volunteers should be treated, what you can expect from the Students' Union and what we expect from you.

2. Definition of a "volunteer"

A volunteer is any student who performs any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual (Volunteering England, 2019). Volunteers are not considered employees of London Metropolitan Students' Union.

This policy covers students who are considered to hold a voluntary role for LMSU, but does not cover students undertaking community volunteering for other host organisations. Roles covered by this policy include:

- Society and sports club committee members
- Student Council members
- Student Reps
- Student Media volunteers
- Student Trustees
- Liberation Officers
- Sustainability Reps
- Reverse Mentoring Scheme participants

3. Expectations of volunteers

The relationship between LMSU and our volunteers is based on mutual trust and reciprocity. We want you to be clear about what you can expect from us, and what we expect from you in return.

You can expect the following from LMSU:

- to understand the reason and importance of your role
- to have a clear task/role description

- a named support staff member who has the relevant knowledge and experience to support you in your role
- to have clear information about what is and is not expected of you
- to receive adequate induction, training and support
- to receive specialised training where appropriate for your role
- to have access to relevant policies and resources for your role
- to be insured and to volunteer in a safe environment under the public liability of LMSU
- to be treated with respect and in a non-discriminatory manner
- to have opportunities for personal development and be signposted to relevant employability events or support
- to be recognised and appreciated
- to be able to say 'no' to anything which you consider to be unrealistic or unreasonable
- to know what to do if something goes wrong

LMSU expects the following from you:

- to undertake your role with enthusiasm and a proactive attitude
- to abide by the LMSU Members' Code of Conduct at all times
- to adequately consider your availability and suitability for the role, ensuring reliability and good time-keeping, whilst ensuring that your studies take priority
- to make the most of opportunities given, e.g. training - some training will be mandatory and you will be required to attend and engage as a prerequisite of undertaking your volunteer role
- to contribute positively to the aims of the organisation and avoid bringing the organisation into disrepute
- to notify your support staff member as soon as possible if the volunteer role is not for you or you can no longer commit to the role
- to notify your support staff member if there is a change of circumstance relevant to your participation, to ensure reasonable and appropriate support is offered
- to uphold the organisation's values and comply with organisational policies

If you feel that we are not meeting your expectations, please contact your support staff member or full-time officer and we will do everything we can to support you. If we feel that you are not meeting our expectations, we are committed to resolving issues informally as far as is possible, but in some circumstances we may need you to address our concerns or be removed from your volunteer role. See section 11 below for more information regarding dealing with problems.

4. Recruitment of volunteers

Volunteer roles may be recruited in a number of different ways.

For elected roles, your suitability for the role will be based on the election count. Election rules are specified in the Union's Bye-Laws, or are made clear when advertising the role.

Non-elected roles will be recruited through the LMSU website, social media, posters, leaflets, newsletters, events and other means. Recruitment shall be based on your suitability to perform a specified task or role on behalf of LMSU, and in line with our aim to ensure our volunteers are representative of the wider student body.

Before you apply or stand for a volunteer role, it should be made clear why the role exists and its purpose in relation to the charitable aims of LMSU. A role description will be made available and should include an outline of duties, training requirements, support provided and any restrictions affecting who can take on the role.

LMSU believes that volunteering opportunities should be available to all students and is committed to creating a culture where all students are treated with dignity and respect. We will make every effort to ensure that volunteering opportunities will be inclusive, accessible and safe to all, and where reasonably practical, we will adopt alternative arrangements/formats to facilitate this.

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

5. Induction, training and development

Volunteers need no previous training, experience or qualifications: you just need enthusiasm, energy and commitment. Training is also a very important aspect of our work and we realise that volunteers are more confident and effective when given training, particularly if you haven't done anything similar before. All volunteers will be given induction and training appropriate to the specific tasks to be undertaken in your role.

Where relevant, further specific training will be provided to undertake your role, including safeguarding training where this is relevant to specific roles.

6. Supervision and support

You will be given the details of a specific member of LMSU staff to support you in your volunteering role. This person will deliver your induction and training, provide you with any resources you need and advise on specific queries you might have. You can also contact any of the LMSU full-time officers for support and advice. We will also facilitate peer to peer support, building a community amongst volunteers in similar roles to you so that you can share best practice and learn from each other.

7. Expenses

Some volunteer roles may be eligible to claim reasonable expenses, provided you have spoken to your support staff member, received approval and kept receipts. The process for submitting expenses will be outlined in your induction and will be in line with the LMSU Travel and Expenses Policy.

8. Boundaries and signposting

As a student volunteer, you may encounter students with a range of issues or difficulties. Depending on your role, you may be able to offer informal peer support, but you are not expected to be a counsellor or advisor. You will be given training on the boundaries of your role, how to signpost students for further support, and where to go if you are unsure how to help a student. Your support staff member will also be able to advise and support you.

9. Health, safety and risk management

All volunteer roles at LMSU are risk assessed, and risk assessments will be shared with you as part of your induction and training. We are responsible for providing a safe environment for you to undertake your volunteering role, and you are responsible for following the measures set out in your risk assessment and the Members' Code of Conduct. More information about LMSU's approach to health and safety is available in the Health & Safety Policy.

All volunteers engaged in LMSU-organised volunteering activities/roles are covered by the appropriate Employers' Liability Insurance and Public Liability Insurance. These policies ensure that volunteers are protected in the event that a claim is made against you for third party injury/damage to people/property.

Volunteers will only be required to have a full DBS disclosure check if relevant and if your role involves care-giving and/or sustained and direct contact with young people or vulnerable adults. These volunteer roles will also be required to undertake safeguarding training which will be arranged by LMSU. You can find out more information in the Safeguarding Policy and procedure.

10. Confidentiality and data protection

LMSU will hold and process personal data relating to volunteers for the purpose of administering volunteering activities. This data will be maintained in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information about LMSU's handling of personal data, please see our Student Privacy Notice..

As a volunteer, you may need to handle others' personal data - for example, names and email addresses of club or society members. If this is part of your role, LMSU will provide training on handling data in line with GDPR, which you will need to attend and abide by.

Volunteers should understand the meaning and importance of maintaining confidentiality. You may be in a position where you have access to confidential records and personally sensitive information. It is important to respect these confidences: confidentiality means not discussing information outside a specific group of people.

Should you have concerns about any information you have received in confidence, you should discuss this with your support staff member at the earliest opportunity. This is not a breach of confidentiality: this is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all concerned. Where there is a safeguarding concern relating to the wellbeing of a child, young person or adult at risk, you must bring it to the attention of your support staff member and follow the procedure outlined in LMSU's Safeguarding Policy and procedure. Training on wellbeing, safety and confidentiality will be provided where this is appropriate for your role.

11. Dealing with problems

LMSU aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. We seek to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly. We will attempt to deal with any problems informally and at the earliest opportunity. All volunteers will have a named person to contact for advice or support in the case of any difficulty.

As a volunteer, you are expected to abide by the LMSU Members' Code of Conduct at all times. Any breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action, as outlined in the Code itself. The Code of Conduct also outlines the process for making a complaint about a volunteer or other LMSU student. You will be given an overview of the expected behaviours and key processes in the Code of Conduct as part of your induction and training.

You can raise a complaint about any member of LMSU using [this form](#). A member of LMSU staff will have an initial conversation with the person making the complaint, and determine whether an informal resolution such as mediation is appropriate or whether the complaint needs to be investigated further. Should the complaint progress to formal resolution, a disciplinary panel will be held, and this panel will determine any appropriate sanctions. You can find more details in the Members' Code of Conduct.

We have set out in section 3 of this policy what you can expect from us, and what we expect from you. If any party is concerned that these expectations are not being met, either by a volunteer or by LMSU, we encourage you to get in touch with

LMSU. We may also use monitoring data such as records of training or attendance at meetings to assess whether volunteers are meeting our expectations to assess a volunteer's suitability to continue in the role: we will always give volunteers a chance to address our concerns, but we reserve the right to remove an individual from a role if they are unable to demonstrate that they can meet our expectations. If we believe a volunteer is not meeting the expectations of the role, we will invite the volunteer to an informal meeting to offer support and agree actions to resolve the issue. This may be followed up with a further meeting, where if expectations are still not being met, we may decide to end the volunteering opportunity.

12. Communication, feedback and volunteer voice

Effective, two-way communication between LMSU and our volunteers is a key part of making your volunteering experience the best it can be. If you have any feedback on your role as a volunteer, the support you receive or any challenges you are facing, you can contact your support staff member or one of the full-time officers. We will conduct a formal feedback gathering exercise at least once a year, and your feedback will inform future developments. Some roles may also have the opportunity to provide feedback through structured forums such as committees throughout the year. We welcome open, honest feedback from all our volunteers, and strive to continuously improve our support for you.

13. Reward and recognition

We recognise the outstanding contribution that our volunteers make to students' lives at London Met, and will use every opportunity to champion our volunteers and the impact that you make. This includes formally recognising your role on your degree certificate, highlighting success stories on our website and social media, and the provision of regular volunteer-only social events throughout the year. We also hold annual award ceremonies to recognise and thank our volunteers for your contribution to LMSU.

14. Moving on

We hope that your experiences as a volunteer have given you valuable skills and knowledge that you can bring to your next step in life. We encourage all our volunteers to engage with the University's Careers and Employability team, who can help you to showcase your skills and experience in applications for jobs or further study. We will ask all volunteers who are leaving us to complete a short feedback survey, which will help us to further develop our services. Some roles, such as Student Group leaders, may be asked to provide a handover before you leave: you will be supported to do this where it is required.

15. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or in light of any legal or other developments that will impact upon how we work with volunteers.

Date of policy creation: September 2021

Review date: September 2024