

City University London Students' Union Volunteers Policy

Approved by:	Trustee Board
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Responsible for Implementation	Chief Executive
Responsible for Interpretation	Trustee Board

1. Background

- 1.1. City University London Students' Union (CULSU) recognises that engagement with volunteers is essential to the realisation of the organisation's vision, mission and strategic plan, together with the delivery of many of the organisation's activities which are recognisable by members, the University and the wider world.
- 1.2. Many of the objectives in the Union's strategic plan rely on the engagement of volunteers in the work of the Union. They are fundamental to what the organisation does.
- 1.3. Volunteer opportunities at the Union are diverse and substantial. These opportunities can allow an individual to personally develop, pursue specific or general interests, contribute to representation of the University, engage with other organisations, forge links with community groups, advocate on behalf of others, raise awareness of situations or causes, meet likeminded individuals or have a rewarding and enjoyable time while a member of the Union.
- 1.4. Volunteers make an important and valuable contribution to the overall work of the Union. The wide range of skills, expertise and commitment they bring enables the Union to provide activities and services which would be unimaginable without them.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The purpose of this policy is to provide overall guidance and direction to volunteers and staff engaged in activities involving volunteers and volunteer management.
- 2.2. This policy applies to all those undertaking a volunteer role with CULSU.
- 2.3. Volunteering England's definition¹ can be used as a basis to define what we consider volunteering in the context of the Union.
- 2.4. For the purposes of the Union volunteers are defined as those members who undertake any activity recognised by the Union that involves spending time, unpaid and not for formal academic credit, doing something that aims to benefit the environment, University or local community or someone (individuals or

¹ <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/iwanttovolunteer/what-is-volunteering>
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groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual member.

- 2.5. The volunteering opportunities provided by the Union currently include, but are not necessarily limited to:
 - 2.5.1. Trustees
 - 2.5.2. Members of Union Council
 - 2.5.3. Committee members of Societies & Student Led Projects
 - 2.5.4. Programme Reps
 - 2.5.5. Part Time Student Officers
 - 2.5.6. Members operating Student-Led Campaigns
 - 2.5.7. Members operating Student Media

3. Principles of volunteer engagement

- 3.1. The following principles are adopted by the Union with respect to activities involving volunteers.
 - 3.1.1. The Union is committed to engaging volunteers in its work and values their contribution to the organisation.
 - 3.1.2. The Union is proud of the diversity of the student community and will support this through its voluntary activities and recognised groups.
 - 3.1.3. The Union is committed to protecting volunteers from discrimination and harm, whether physical, financial or emotional.
 - 3.1.4. The Union will provide information about the nature of each volunteer role, and develop the range and nature of opportunities which are available.
 - 3.1.5. The Union appreciates that some volunteer roles may have specific requirements or checks which must be carried out prior to commencement.
 - 3.1.6. The Union will ensure fair, efficient and consistent recruitment, election and dismissal procedures.
 - 3.1.7. The Union will help to introduce new volunteers to their role, the organisation, its work, policies, practices and people; as well as providing ongoing training and personal development opportunities.
 - 3.1.8. The Union will not use volunteers or develop volunteer roles to undertake tasks which are more appropriately carried out by paid staff.
 - 3.1.9. The Union recognises that different voluntary activities and recognised groups need varying levels and styles of support and supervision. As such, the Union will endeavour to tailor appropriate services.
 - 3.1.10. The Union will endeavour to provide adequate resources to support voluntary activities and recognised groups.
 - 3.1.11. The Union expects its staff at all levels to work positively with volunteers, and where appropriate, involve them in their work.
 - 3.1.12. The Union will recognise, accredit and appreciate the involvement of volunteers and the contribution they make through publicity, awards and schemes.
 - 3.1.13. The Union is mindful that volunteering is an addition to academic life which must take priority and will not place undue pressure on those undertaking volunteer roles.

4. Recruitment, selection and dismissal

- 4.1. In general all volunteering opportunities are available to all members of the Union and are normally renewable annually.
- 4.2. One of the Union's values is to be democratic; at all levels students are empowered to influence and change the workings of the Union. For this reason a significant number of opportunities are subject to election by and from a certain constituency of members. Constituencies can either be predetermined with a dependency on student status or opt-in. Procedures for elections are contained within the Union's Constitution and Regulations.
- 4.3. Where a recruitment and selection process is used for appointing to a volunteer role a person specification will be made available.
- 4.4. Any further requirements for undertaking a volunteer role will be outlined in the role description.
- 4.5. Role Descriptions will be available for each volunteer role and contain a complete and current description of the duties and responsibilities of that role. This role description should also include the normal location of the opportunity and time commitment of the role if appropriate.
- 4.6. The Union will maintain an up to date record of the mandatory and optional training associated to each volunteer role
- 4.7. The Union will maintain details of who the relevant volunteer line manager and/or staff support is. These contact details are passed to volunteers as their main point of contact.
- 4.8. For opportunities offered by other organisations, equivalent information to that required in the role description for a Union opportunity will be required before the role is promoted.
- 4.9. Procedures for the removal of members from many volunteer roles are contained within the Union's Constitution and Regulations.
- 4.10. Any member is able to resign from any volunteer role at any point. Where practicable support will be provided by a volunteer line manager or staff member to handover responsibilities to another volunteer.

5. Training, development and recognition

- 5.1. Unless specified in the role description, volunteers need no previous training, experience or qualifications to undertake a role within the Union.
- 5.2. All volunteers will have a handbook available to them which contains information about the Union, its policies and its practices which are relevant to all volunteers.
- 5.3. The Union will provide training opportunities which are tailored to each volunteer role; this may include written materials and eLearning. Some training will be mandatory and may include a validation test to ensure the subject matter has been understood suitably.
- 5.4. The Union will seek feedback of all online training manuals and in person workshops and briefing sessions to ensure the training provided to volunteers is fit for purpose, equipping volunteers with the knowledge and skills to carry out their role.
- 5.5. The Union Activities Awards seeks to recognise volunteers for the whole spectrum of the Union's activities.

6. Support

- 6.1. The Union aims to ensure that barriers to taking up volunteer roles are recognised and where possible removed. Volunteer opportunities are offered and operated in accordance with the Union's Equal Opportunities Policy

- 6.2. The Union recognises it has a Duty of Care to ensure volunteers undertake their roles in a safe environment. The Union has a Health & Safety Policy which applies to those undertaking volunteer roles and it is expected that all those undertaking and supporting volunteer roles comply with this policy.
- 6.3. Public Liability insurance is generally automatically provided for all members undertaking a volunteering role offered by the Union.
- 6.4. The Union will support volunteers working directly with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults in an CULSU volunteer role to apply for their DBS checks.
- 6.5. Volunteers are eligible for the reimbursement of reasonable expenses which relate directly to costs incurred relating to the activity being undertaken. Normally travel to and from activities, subsistence and entertaining costs are not directly reimbursable for volunteers, though subsidises may be available.
- 6.6. A specific policy on volunteer expenses is available, together with information on how to make claims.
- 6.7. Volunteers who have concerns or grievances about the Union's staff or Officers should follow the complaints procedures laid down in the Union's Constitution and Regulations.

7. Representation of the Union

- 7.1. Actions which could be perceived as representation of the Union may include, but are not limited to, public statement to the press, collaborations or joint ventures, or any agreements involving contractual or financial obligations. Policies and procedures exist particularly in the case of financial and contractual obligations.
- 7.2. Prior to any action or statement that might significantly affect or obligate the Union; volunteers must seek consultation and approval from the relevant Union Staff member or Full Time Student Officer.

8. Record Keeping

- 8.1. Details of members of the Union are kept using the Union's record systems. Data pertaining to an individual's student record is provided by the University.
- 8.2. Information about a member's volunteer role(s), including training information, awards, and other relevant information is kept on the same system.
- 8.3. Records are only accessible to staff and lead volunteers who directly support those volunteers.
- 8.4. A member's permission shall be sought before details are disclosed to an external organisation, except where to withhold information would leave the Union liable to prosecution.

9. Expectations

- 9.1. In terms of delivering our services to volunteers it is useful to outline expectations of both the individuals undertaking the roles and what they can expect from the Union.
- 9.2. The Union expects volunteers:
 - 9.2.1. To treat others with respect and courtesy, act in a manner which is appreciative of the wide diversity within the Union's membership, and not discriminate against others on any grounds.
 - 9.2.2. To be an ambassador for the Union and the University, bringing neither into potential disrepute and maintain good relations with the external community.

- 9.2.3. To perform their volunteering role to the best of their ability, undertaking the tasks within the role description and to be clear and upfront if they are experiencing problems or difficulties undertaking the role.
 - 9.2.4. To follow the Union's policies and procedures, including Equal Opportunities, Health & Safety, and Finance.
 - 9.2.5. To respond to emails and other messages within a reasonable timeframe and to attend on time, or give reasonable notice to cancel or rearrange meetings.
 - 9.2.6. To have a willingness to learn, to undertake all mandatory training as part of their volunteering role and make a commitment to undertake relevant optional training.
- 9.3. Volunteers can expect the Union:
- 9.3.1. To treat them with respect and courtesy, and act in a manner which is appreciative of the wide diversity within the Union's membership.
 - 9.3.2. To provide a role description for their volunteering role as well as training, support, and resources to help them undertake the role.
 - 9.3.3. To provide online and in-person services to support individuals undertaking volunteer roles.
 - 9.3.4. To promote their activities, achievements and successes in line with the Union's guidance on publicity; and to undertake recognition schemes such as the Student Activities Awards.
 - 9.3.5. To respond to your emails, messages and requests within a reasonable timeframe.
 - 9.3.6. To be mindful of academic life and not make requests which are potentially detrimental to academic success.
 - 9.3.7. To investigate complaints within an appropriate timeframe and keep complainants informed as to progress.