

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX

STUDENTS*
UNION

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX STUDENTS* UNION

STUDENT VOLUNTEERING POLICY



Version: V1- November 2018

Approved by: Audit and Risk Committee

Date: September 2020

Review date (by): September 2021

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SU MEMBERSHIP VOLUNTEERING POLICY

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1. General

The Students' Union actively encourages students undertake volunteering. The Students' Union offers many exciting volunteering opportunities from both its established VTeam program and throughout its operations including, but not limited to Volunteer Drivers, Club and Society Executive Positions and SU Advice Roles. This policy outlines some important information and guidelines which all Students' Union volunteers and staff must adhere to. The policy aims to ensure:

- the health and safety of all volunteers
- clarity on financial processes
- clear safeguarding processes
- a code of conduct
- clarity of responsibility around visa requirements
- expectations of volunteers

2. Volunteering Definitions

The following definitions can be found in the Tier 4 Policy Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-application-for-uk-visa-as-tier-4-student>

2.1 Voluntary Workers

Voluntary workers will usually have contractual obligations to perform the work (e.g. to attend at particular times and carry out specific tasks) with the employer being contractually required to provide the work – the contract does not have to be written. The worker is usually remunerated in kind.

2.2 Volunteering

Students who are volunteering do not have a contract, they must not be a substitute for an employee and they must not be doing unpaid work – i.e. receiving payment in kind (although they are sometimes reimbursed for reasonable travel and subsistence expenses). Volunteers usually help a charity or voluntary or public sector organisation.

3. Visa Restrictions

Some volunteers will be subject to visa restrictions. **Volunteers should indicate this to their volunteer supervisor** and remember in some cases working **and volunteering activity** both count towards restricted hours. ie (Tier 4).

Volunteers agree that it is their responsibility to ensure they do not exceed any Visa restrictions and that they abide by their immigration permissions at all times.

4. Equal Opportunities

The Students' Union believes that volunteering opportunities should be available to all Essex students and is committed to creating a culture where all students are treated with dignity and respect, solely on their merits, abilities and potential. Every effort will be made to ensure that volunteering opportunities will be accessible and safe to all, and where reasonably practical, alternative arrangements/formats will be adopted to facilitate this. More details can be found in Section 4 of the [SU's Student Membership General Policy](#)

5. Health and Safety

This section is complimentary to the existing [SU Health & Safety Policy and code of practice](#) and the [University of Essex Health and Safety Policy](#), which must also be adhered to at all times. Printed copies of the University's Health and Safety policies and procedures and the Students' Union Health & Safety Policy and code of practice are available upon request.

Volunteering should be a fun and enjoyable experience, the SU will take all reasonable steps to ensure that volunteers are safe during their volunteering experience. In return the SU will expect that volunteers also take responsibility for the health and safety of themselves and those around them.

All volunteers will be required to register their details on the SU Volunteering Portal: [VTeam online](#), declare details of any medical conditions they may have, and provide emergency contact details prior to volunteering.

Volunteers are encouraged to not undertake any tasks they are unsure of, and to make Project supervisors/leaders aware of any relevant medical conditions on arrival at the project.

The Volunteer will be expected to:

- Take reasonable care for their own Health and Safety, and that of others who may be affected by what they do, or fail to do
- Cooperate with the organisation's policies with regard to Health and Safety requirements
- Not interfere with or misuse equipment
- Report any faults or failings in Health and Safety equipment or procedures immediately

- Inform VTeam staff or the Manager within the area which they are volunteering, of any incidents or near misses as soon as possible following an incident
- Sign a register and record hours of volunteering participation

Where applicable, the volunteer will be given a specific Health & Safety training briefing before participating in any project/activity or prior to the use of unfamiliar equipment.

If an individual is involved in an accident/incident whilst participating in volunteering activity, the designated supervisor or manager will complete the Accident/Incident Reporting procedure on behalf of the volunteer. Where an insurance claim is applicable, the individual must notify the Finance Office Manager in the SU Finance Department, who will facilitate the claims procedure.

The Students' Union will do everything that is 'reasonably practicable' to ensure the health & safety of individuals while participating in volunteering activities/projects organised by the Students' Union (E.g. VTeam; Sports Clubs; Societies etc.).

Where opportunities exist outside of the Students' Union but are advertised through the Students' Union, Health and Safety processes will have been checked. The Students' Union does not endorse, or partner with any organisation for the provision of overseas volunteering opportunities.

6. Training

Prior to volunteering, all volunteers will receive relevant training. This training will be delivered based on the requirements of the role and will include but not be limited to the following:

- **VTeam One-off projects:** all volunteers will receive a project briefing, on the job demonstration of any equipment to be used during their volunteering, health & safety briefing and instructions on the volunteering tasks to be performed.
- **VTeam Placements:** all volunteers will receive a health and safety briefing and on the job training, usually delivered by the placement provider.
- **Students' Union opportunities:** volunteers should expect on the job training and a full Students' Union Health and Safety briefing and Induction.

- **Students' Union drivers:** volunteers will all be required to undergo a MIDAS assessment and vehicle familiarity briefing before driving, through the SU.
- **VTeam Regular project committee members:** volunteers will receive training in marketing, safeguarding, health and safety and guidance of best practice of volunteering, an introduction to the Students' Union, an outline of the accident reporting procedure, GradIntel volunteer portal training, social media training, communication/marketing training, GDPR training and organisation/time management training.

7. Insurance

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

Where an external organisation is providing the volunteering opportunity liability insurance will be provided by that organisation.

Volunteer Vehicle Fleet Drivers will be insured under our Motor Fleet Policy, providing they meet our Insurers Motor Fleet Policy Cover criteria. Additional information will be required for insurance purposes for those who qualify as a "non-standard" driver. Your eligibility will be assessed as part of the volunteer driver application process. Refer also to the [SU Vehicle Driver Handbook – Section 5](#).

8. Volunteering Expenses

It is reasonable to assume that expenses may be incurred whilst engaging a volunteering activity/project. Volunteers will be able to claim for out of pocket expenses in accordance with the following guidelines:

8.1. General expenses

- In most cases, when volunteering at an external placement, travel expenses will be covered by the external organisation providing the volunteering opportunity. Details of arrangements for reimbursement will be discussed prior to the commencement of volunteering.
- Where this is not possible, expenses should be agreed, in advance, with a member of VTeam staff or the Manager within the area which provides

the volunteering opportunity and receipts should be supplied, in order for expenses to be reimbursed.

- Any expenses that haven't been discussed with a member of VTeam staff or Students' Union Manager prior to the expense being incurred, may not be reimbursed
- All expenses should be claimed within 15 working days
- In order to claim the expense, a volunteer must log volunteering hours, keep the receipt and complete a student expense form (available at the SU reception), which will be passed over to the appropriate budget holder for approval, and then handed back to SU Reception for the expense claim to be given.
- Expenses are normally processed within 2 weeks

8.2. Subsistence expenses

- The following can be reclaimed for subsistence (food and drink): Up to £8 (Breakfast – restricted to Volunteer Drivers leaving before 8am)
- Up to £5 (Lunch - not returning before 1pm)
- Up to £15 (Evening Meal – restricted to Volunteer Drivers not returning until after 7pm)

Example scenarios of these costings are displayed below:

- If, for example, someone volunteers for a half-day i.e. 8am – 1pm, they would be entitled to reimbursement up to the amounts shown for breakfast and lunch.
- If, for example, someone volunteers for the whole day, i.e. 8am – 7pm they would be entitled to reimbursement up to the total amounts shown above.
- If, for example, someone volunteers from 9am – 2pm they would be entitled to reimbursement for lunch only.

Please note reimbursement will only be made for food and non-alcoholic drinks consumed during time spent volunteering. Receipts **must** be provided in order to reclaim out of pocket expenses.

If volunteering occurs on campus only, then Students' Union Vouchers may be issued to Volunteers who are volunteering for more than 6 hours where lunch would reasonably be provided ("Meal Deal" £3.50 voucher only).

8.3. Travel expenses

- Public transport expenses will be repaid in full on evidence of receipts.
- Buses, trains or personal transport should all be considered and decisions should be based upon cost and practicality, not ease or personal preference.
- Where a volunteer wishes to use their own privately owned vehicle, the driver must:
 1. Obtain the prior approval of the Volunteering Manager or Manager of the area they are Volunteering for; and
 2. Present to the Manager their driving licence and motor insurance certificate (for the vehicle they are driving), confirming they are eligible to drive for insurance purposes. Mileage will not be reimbursed where this information has not been provided and verified.
- Where a privately owned car has been approved for travel, mileage will be repaid at 25 pence per mile for the first 50 miles of any return journey, and 15 pence per mile thereafter.

Points to note:

- The volunteer should use the cheapest form of travel available (e.g. if travel was by train, the ticket should be a standard or a cheap day return, not a first class ticket. If travelling in groups of 3 or more then a GroupSave ticket should be used when travelling together).
- For the use of the volunteer's own car, mileage should be recorded to enable repayment. (NB if mileage is not recorded, start & finish locations will be used to estimate mileage using the AA route planner).
- Taxi fares will **not** be reimbursed unless there is a prior agreement with a VTeam staff member or the Manager of the area they are Volunteering for.

9. Code of Conduct

All volunteers are required to abide by the [Student Membership General Policy](#). All volunteers have to read the relevant policies relating to the department they are volunteering for Examples would include:

- Where someone volunteers for a VTeam Regular Project they will be required to sign Regular Project Volunteer Agreement

- Where someone volunteers for a Sports Club activity they will be required to comply with the Essex Blades and individual club Code of Conduct

10. Monitoring and Supervision

All VTeam volunteers will be given a named member of SU staff as a direct point of contact should they have any concerns about their volunteering placement or project. The VTeam email address, vteam@essex.ac.uk, is also available as a means of support should this point of contact not be available when required.

Volunteers on regular projects will be supervised by the Session Leader or in their absence any member from the Project Committee (who has completed a full training day course). One-off projects a member of VTeam or Students' Union staff will be present. Nominated staff from the partner organisation will be present in the case of placements.

Should a volunteer wish to speak confidentially about any aspect of their volunteering experience they can request a meeting with SU staff by emailing their point of contact directly or emailing vteam@essex.ac.uk.

11. Confidentiality and General Data Protection Regulation

Volunteers should understand the meaning and importance of maintaining confidentiality. A volunteer 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 of a specific placement/project/group/event.**

Should a volunteer have concerns about the information they receive they should discuss this with the manager/supervisor of their volunteering at the earliest opportunity. This is **not** a breach of confidentiality; this is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all concerned.

The Students' Union will hold and process personal data relating to its' volunteers for the purpose of administrating volunteering activities. This data will be maintained in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations.

12. Safeguarding

The Students' Union has a [Safeguarding Policy](#) available on essexstudent.com and details the SU procedures in relation to reporting safeguarding concerns. All

volunteers will have a Safeguarding briefing prior to any engagement with children or vulnerable adults.

Should a volunteer have any safeguarding questions or concerns, please contact the Volunteering Manager or the manager in their area of volunteering in the first instance. The Students' Union has appointed Safeguarding Officers that are tasked with noting down concerns and passing them on further if applicable.

The Safeguarding Officers hold the following positions within the Students' Union:

- Deputy Director of Activities and Support
- Volunteering Manager
- Student Activities Co-ordinator
- SU Advice Manager

13. Consequences for breaching policy

Any student found to be in breach of the Students' Union Volunteering Policy, will in the first instance be required to meet with the Manager of the area and/or the Volunteering Manager upon which the next steps will be decided. The Students' Union reserves the right to remove volunteers from any Students' Union led opportunities, or prevent access to further opportunities without notice.

14. Operational oversight on this policy

Students' Union Managers and staff who have volunteers within their departments are responsible for ensuring that volunteers have read, understood, acted upon the content and agreed to this policy before they start volunteering.

In the case of existing volunteers, it is expected that their Manager will ensure all existing volunteers have read, understood and agreed to this policy. VTeam have specific responsibility for students who are volunteering through their projects.

This policy will be reviewed annually unless significant changes occur which require more immediate updates.

Appendix A

LINKS TO RELEVANT POLICIES

[University of Essex Students' Union – Student Membership General Policy](#)

[SU Health & Safety Policy and code of conduct](#)

[University of Essex's Health & Safety Policy](#)

[SU Vehicle Driver Handbook](#)

[VTeam online Portal](#)

[Digital Volunteering Policy](#)