

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
STAFFING POLICY ON VOLUNTEERING

1 INTRODUCTION

The University of Aberdeen is one of the largest employers in the local region and plays a pivotal role in the community of the North East of Scotland as a Higher Education provider. As part of our commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility we recognise the benefits to our organisation and to the wider community of a structured framework within which volunteering can take place.

This Policy sets out the key principles which will be applied whenever members of University staff undertake voluntary work in the wider community and also when individuals make a voluntary contribution to the work of the University.

It applies only to volunteers i.e. those who wish to bring their experience, knowledge and skills to the University, on an unpaid basis, to the benefit of the organisation and/or the local community or those members of University staff who wish to undertake such a role in an external organisation, including those overseas. It should be noted that volunteers are different from students, those on work placements or those on secondment, where the primary aim is to obtain work experience or to carry out work or research in specific areas. Volunteering is also distinct from undertaking public duties e.g. participation in School governing bodies, membership of Children's Panel, Justice of the Peace, Jury service etc.

2 UNIVERSITY STAFF WISHING TO UNDERTAKE EXTERNAL VOLUNTARY WORK

2.1 Identification of Opportunities

There are 2 ways in which members of University staff may wish to identify and undertake volunteering opportunities with an external organisation:

- Placements arranged through the University i.e. via an institutional process of "matching" individuals to Corporate Social Responsibility projects within the local community and beyond (including overseas); or
- Placements arranged by individual members of staff.

2.2 Time Off to Undertake Voluntary Work

Members of staff wishing to undertake a voluntary activity which involves a minimal commitment during normal working hours with the University should discuss their requirements with the Head of School/Section in the first instance with a view to reaching a mutually acceptable arrangement. The Head of School/Section may choose to delegate responsibility for the consideration of individual requests to the appropriate Line Manager.

If the voluntary activity is likely to involve a more onerous time commitment during normal working hours, requests for temporary or permanent variations to working patterns, as outlined in the University's Policy Statement on Flexible Working, will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Each request for paid time off to undertake external voluntary work

will be considered on its individual merits. Requests for time off to undertake this type of activity cannot be agreed if they conflict with the operational needs of the individual's School or Section or the management interests of the University. It is anticipated that normally, not more than 5% of staff would be absent from a School/Section as a result of undertaking external voluntary activities at any given time.

Approval to undertake external voluntary activities outwith normal working hours need only be sought from the Head of School/Section if the activities are likely to involve either a conflict of interest with the member of staff's role at the University or if it will have an impact on the individual's ability to carry out their duties.

2.3 Right of Appeal

In circumstances where the Head of School/Section (or their nominated representative) declines a request from a member of staff for time off to undertake voluntary work, the member of staff concerned will have the right of appeal against this decision. The grounds of appeal should be submitted, in writing, to the Director of Human Resources within 10 working days of receiving the decision. The appeal will be heard by the Head of College, normally within 20 working days of the written appeal being received. If a Head of School/Section has delegated the authority to consider a request to undertake voluntary work to a nominated representative, the Head of School/Section will be eligible to hear the appeal. The appeal will be heard in line with the Procedure for Hearing an Appeal in the University.

2.4 Insurance

Members of staff undertaking voluntary activities with an external organisation through a placement organised by the University will be covered by the University's Employer's Liability insurance policy. Whilst the University's insurance policy only covers instances which occur as a result of the University's negligence, it would be ascertained prior to the placement commencing that the external organisation's Liability insurance policies would cover members of University staff if they suffer injury as a result of negligence on the part of the receiving organisation during the voluntary placement.

Members of staff who have arranged their own voluntary placement will not be covered by University insurance. Members of staff should, therefore, ensure that the external organisation's insurance policies would cover themselves and any third parties involved in any incidents prior to taking up a placement.

2.5 Policies and Procedures

Members of staff undertaking voluntary activities outwith the University will be required to comply with the external organisation's relevant policies and procedures, including requirements relating to health and safety and confidentiality.

3 VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY

3.1 Advertisement of Opportunities

Identified volunteering opportunities within the University will be advertised on the University website.

Those interested in undertaking voluntary activities will be required to submit a CV and letter of application, stating how they meet the criteria associated with the placement. All applicants for volunteering opportunities will normally be interviewed by an appropriate member of staff from within the relevant area, following consultation with the Head of School/Section. References will be taken up where it is deemed appropriate to do so. Any individual undertaking voluntary activities in a “childcare position” will be subject to a Disclosure check at Enhanced level. Under the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003, a “childcare position” is deemed to be one where the individual’s normal duties include caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children, or supervising or managing an individual who undertakes these duties. Disclosure checks are not required for individuals undertaking voluntary activities which are not deemed to be “childcare positions”.

The University will supply the following information to prospective volunteers:

- A description of the volunteering activity outlining the specific tasks, responsibilities and to whom the volunteer will be accountable
- Terms and conditions, including the duration and hours relating to the placement
- A person specification outlining the relevant skills, knowledge and experience required to carry out the activities effectively.

It is the responsibility of the engaging area to clarify that volunteers have the required skills and experience to undertake the voluntary activity.

In accordance with our commitment to equality and diversity, we encourage applications from prospective volunteers across all sections of the community, irrespective of their personal backgrounds. We particularly encourage applications from unemployed members of the external community to provide an opportunity to gain experience or learn new skills, thereby assisting them in obtaining paid employment in future.

Volunteers will not be engaged in activities which replace an existing paid post.

3.2 Remuneration

No financial remuneration will be made in respect of voluntary activities.

3.3 Supervision and Support

Volunteers will be offered an induction to the University and appropriate training to assist them in gaining maximum benefit from the placement.

Volunteers will be assigned a supervisor who will provide appropriate support and training relating to the voluntary activities. Regular meetings will be held to provide individuals with an opportunity to feedback on progress.

Volunteers will be provided with reasonable and appropriate facilities and equipment to undertake their placement effectively

3.4 Complaints By or About Volunteers

Volunteers will be subject to the University’s Complaints Procedure for Volunteers (Appendix A).

3.5 Insurance

Any individual undertaking voluntary work for the University will be covered by the University's Liability insurance policies for the duration of the voluntary placement.

3.6 Health and Safety

Volunteers will be required to comply with the University's Health and Safety Policy (www.abdn.ac.uk/safety/pol.hti) whilst working in the University.

2.7 Confidentiality

Volunteers will be required to respect any confidential information whilst on placement within the University at all times. The University reserves the right to require volunteers to comply with our Codes of Practice on confidentiality and intellectual property rights if necessary.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR VOLUNTEERS

The University recognises that there may be situations where members of staff, volunteers or external organisations have issues or concerns which require to be resolved. This Procedure outlines the process which will be followed if a complaint is made against a member of University staff, a volunteer or an individual within an external organisation. The Procedure aims to establish a framework within which complaints can be dealt with efficiently, fairly and objectively.

Wherever possible, issues or concerns should be dealt with and resolved informally. However, if informal actions have failed to resolve a matter to an individual's satisfaction, the following procedure should be followed.

Complaints about a member of University Staff

Complaints raised by a volunteer or a member of an external organisation about a member of University Staff will be dealt with under the University's Grievance or Disciplinary Procedure as appropriate, depending upon the nature of the complaint.

Complaints about a Volunteer

Complaints raised about a volunteer should be referred to his/her supervisor within the University, who will write to the volunteer outlining the allegations made against him/her and invite him/her to a meeting to discuss the matter. Following this meeting, the individual will be notified in writing of the decision and will be provided with the opportunity to appeal if s/he wishes. If the volunteer wishes to appeal against the decision, s/he will be invited to meet with a more senior manager within the University who has had no previous involvement with the matter. The volunteer will be notified of the outcome of his/her appeal in writing following the appeal hearing. The volunteer may choose to be accompanied by a friend or colleague at any meetings held in accordance with the Complaints Procedure.

Complaints about an Individual in an External Organisation

Complaints raised about an individual in an external organisation should be referred to the named supervisor within the external organisation. The supervisor will ensure that the matter is dealt with in accordance with the external organisation's policies and procedures relating to Grievance or Disciplinary Procedures, as appropriate.