

# Staff Volunteering Policy

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# Staff Volunteering

## Policy

### 1. Background

The University of Strathclyde is a leading international technological university inspired by its founding mission as ‘the place of useful learning’. We are a socially progressive employer and recognise the positive benefits that come from increased community engagement and the value of having a structured framework within which volunteering can take place.

The aim of this policy is to enable and support members of staff to be proactive in voluntary activities that mutually benefit the individual, the University and the community. The policy has been developed to articulate the meaning of volunteering, to clarify the benefits which result from volunteering activity and to detail the process for applying to undertake volunteering activities.

This policy allows staff to apply for up to two days’ paid leave per year to participate in University organised or approved personally organised Volunteering Activity.

### 2. Definition of Volunteering

The University defines a staff volunteer for the purposes of this policy as an employee who carries out tasks which provide services and/or support for individuals or community organisations freely, without financial payment or compensation.

It should be noted that, for the purposes of this policy, volunteering is different from undertaking public duties e.g. participating in School governing bodies, membership of Children’s Panel or Jury Service etc. which is covered under the Special Leave policy (section 8 - Voluntary Public Service).

### 3. Benefits of Volunteering

The University recognises the many benefits of staff volunteering, which can include:

- Sharing of expertise and knowledge
- Supporting the University Values
- Engagement with, and giving something back to, the community
- Positive role modelling for young people
- Development of the skills of our staff
- Improving community relations
- Demonstrating the University’s commitment as a socially progressive employer

### 4. Volunteering conditions

There are two ways for University staff to identify and undertake volunteering opportunities with an external organisation:

- o Volunteering activity arranged through the University
- o Volunteering activity arranged by individual members of staff

In either instance, the University recognises the positive and meaningful impact of staff participating in voluntary activities. In order to be considered for volunteering leave, the following conditions should be met:

- The policy applies to employees on full time or part time contracts, but it not applicable for workers engaged on limited hours contracts/assignments.
- Staff are eligible to apply for two working days of paid volunteering leave per year (or pro rata for staff who work part time).
- Some volunteering activities will require commitment and participation over and above these two days and some staff may want to volunteer for more than two days. Permission should be sought from their Head of Department/School or manager and consideration given to using unpaid leave or annual leave for commitments which exceed the two days of paid leave per annum indicated.
- A record of time off for volunteering will be kept by the Head of Department/School or manager. So that the volume and type of volunteering activity for which paid time off has been granted can be monitored, Heads of Department will be asked annually for a statement of the volunteering leave which they have approved.
- Volunteering leave will always be subject to the prior agreement of the Head of Department/School or manager and will reflect the day to day requirements of the Department or School.
- It is recognised that many staff may be volunteering significant amounts of their own time. Whilst this is welcome, it is separate from this policy which is concerned with the provision of time off within working hours. Volunteers cannot be reimbursed for any of their free time which they use for such activities.
- The release of staff from work to participate in voluntary work must be balanced against the other demands and priorities of the department or school and, as such, time off for this purpose is discretionary and does not constitute a contractual entitlement.

## 5. Examples of Volunteering

- Right to read/ Paired reading
- Interview practice or career talks for young people
- External Mentoring
- Ward Volunteering at a local hospital
- Supporting disadvantaged persons in the community as part of an organised programme
- Glasgow volunteer charter
- MCR Pathways
- Other University arranged Volunteering Opportunities which are highlighted to staff

## 6. Application for Volunteering

- Interested staff should speak to their Head of Department/School or manager to discuss the potential suitability of an activity and the expected time frame for their preferred volunteering.
- When discussing a potential volunteering opportunity, the Head of Department/School or manager should give initial consideration to the volunteering parameters set out in Section 4, above. If this is not the case, then there is unlikely to be further discussion on the volunteering opportunity.
- The staff member should then complete a Volunteering Leave Application Form and should submit it to their Head of Department/School or manager at least 4 weeks prior to the start date of the volunteering activity.
- Applicants will be required to attach a signed risk assessment, from the organisation which is hosting the volunteering activity, to their application form.

- Heads of Department/School and Managers should give serious consideration to all requests. Where there are operational reasons for refusing a request, the manager should clearly communicate these and a follow up discussion on whether an alternative activity or time can be found should ensue.
- The approval or decline should be considered in a timely manner.

## 7. Equality and diversity

The University is committed to ensuring equality of access of volunteering opportunities and in all of its relevant policies and practices.

## 8. Health and Safety

The University's duty of care extends to ensuring that the organisations with whom Strathclyde staff are volunteering have appropriate risk assessments in place. Risk Assessments should form part of the Volunteering Leave Application Form, as notified in section 6, above.

Risk Assessments will ensure that:-

- There is clarity of understanding by each party of their respective roles and responsibilities
- Volunteers are in a position to understand any risks and to make informed judgements
- There are processes in place for enabling problems to be raised and resolved prior to, during the course of, and at the conclusion of, the volunteering activity
- There are contingency plans in place in the event of exceptional and unexpected circumstances
- Once circulated, the responsibility lies with the partner organisation to ensure that Strathclyde staff, during the course of the volunteering activities, are protected through adequate training, supervision, personal protection equipment etc.

## 9. Insurance

If the University organises volunteering activities and invites staff to participate in them, employees will be covered by the University's Public and Employees' Liability Insurance policy. Employees undertaking volunteering activity which they have arranged themselves should ensure that they are covered by the appropriate public/employers liability insurance of the organisation with which they are volunteering.

Employees should also inform their insurers if they are using their own vehicles to undertake volunteering activities. This requirement will apply regardless of whether the volunteering opportunity has been organised by the University or the individual staff member.

## 10. Expenses

It is not anticipated that Volunteers will incur any additional expenses during their paid volunteering days over and above what would normally be incurred during work. However, if volunteers incur additional out-of-pocket expenses as part of the volunteer role, which they would not normally have incurred whilst at work, and these are evidenced by receipts, then these may be reimbursed if this is agreed in advance with the Head of Department/School. Volunteers should note that any sum reimbursed over and above actual expenses incurred in the volunteer role may create legal and tax issues, therefore only additional expenses incurred in the volunteer role should be reimbursed against receipts.

Expenses that the department may choose to reimburse upon production of receipts include:

- Travel costs to and from the University to the place of volunteering which cannot be reimbursed by the organisation with which they are volunteering;

- Mileage costs if a volunteer uses their own vehicle to travel from the University to the place of volunteering which cannot be reimbursed by the organisation with which they are volunteering (standard University mileage rates will apply).

**Volunteers should never accept payments of any nature which are in reality payment for work.**

## **11. Review**

The terms of this policy will be reviewed after its first year of operation and regularly thereafter.