



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



STAFF VOLUNTEERING POLICY

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This document has been designed to be accessible for readers. However, should you require the document in an alternative format please contact the Academic Quality Directorate.

Background

- 1 As part of the University's civic commitment, our strategy 'Impact 2022' and corporate social responsibility priorities and our responsibilities both to students, staff and to society we will offer volunteering opportunities in the financial year to actively contribute to the communities in which our volunteers work (and may also live). The University will support and make a commitment to playing a leading role in the local and regional communities both in High Wycombe, Aylesbury and Uxbridge by aiming to continually build on its relationships, facilitating and creating new partnerships with local employers, partners and organisations.
- 2 This policy is intended to support, encourage and develop employees by facilitating their involvement in volunteering opportunities with either the Students' Union, the local community or region. Volunteering benefits the local community, you and the University.
- 3 Employees can use the skills they have developed at work such as leadership, financial or marketing, to develop the skills of members of voluntary or community organisations, and improve their own morale, physical health and work-life balance by contributing in this way.
- 4 Employees will be given paid leave up to a maximum of **two days per annual leave year** in order to carry out work on volunteering projects.

Purpose Statement

- 5 The purpose of this policy is to enable and support members of staff to be proactive in voluntary activities that mutually benefit the University, individuals, groups/teams and the community. It seeks to inform employees and managers of the levels of discretionary allowance applicable to volunteering.

Applicability and Scope

- 6 The policy applies to substantive employees only (i.e. it is not applicable to atypical, associate lecturers or agency workers) in all projects that are approved by the University (including Students' Union or opportunities identified by an individual member of staff and groups/teams).
- 7 **Time off for volunteering needs to be requested on Business Connect** by the employee. Their line manager will then have to approve the request for time off. This will enable the University to report on its volunteering and corporate social responsibilities.
- 8 Staff volunteering will always be subject to the prior agreement of the line manager and will reflect the operational needs of the school or department.
- 9 It is noted and understood that many staff may well be volunteering significant amounts in their own time. This is welcome but is separate from this scheme which concerns the provision of time off within working hours. Volunteers will not be reimbursed for any of their free time they may wish to devote to such activities.

- 10 Time allowances for volunteering cannot be carried forward from one academic year to the next.

Responsibilities

- 11 **Employees** are able to discuss this as part of the Annual PDR process with their line manager if it is their desire to undertake volunteering activities for experience, personal development, and/or to participate in the wider community / regional engagement agenda. It is the responsibility of employees to apply to their line manager for time off to undertake volunteering activity in accordance with this policy, and to ensure that any volunteering does not impact upon their duties and responsibilities for the University. Employees will be required to provide a copy of the risk assessment completed by the provider organisation when submitting a request to undertake volunteering.
- 12 **Line Managers** are able to discuss relevant volunteering activities with employees, so that they can gain experience, personal development, and/or participation in the community / regional engagement agenda. It is the responsibility of managers to engage, promote the take up of volunteering within and outside the University. Line Managers should review any requests for volunteering and balance these against operational requirements when determining if requests can be approved.

Definitions

- 13 **Staff Volunteer** defined as a substantive employee of Buckinghamshire New University who is supported to engage in projects, approved by the University, to the benefit of the local community, and the University itself. These activities are undertaken freely and are not for financial gain by the individual or by the University.

Types of Volunteering

- 14 The University supports employees who are undertaking community or charitable activities, including community care work, environmental work and conservation projects, fundraising for community projects or charities and administration of public events. The types of volunteering that will be supported are entirely at the discretion of the University.
- 15 The University will only approve volunteer leave if the following principles are satisfied:
- The activity benefits both the community, and the volunteer;
 - The activity does not promote discrimination, hatred or extreme political/religious views;
 - The activity does not conflict with the staff member's role or responsibilities;
 - The activity is in line with the University's overall Corporate Social Responsibility strategy.
- 16 The University offers three different types of volunteering opportunities to employees which include:

- Volunteering which is offered by the Students' Union
 - Volunteering organised by an individual member of staff
 - Volunteering which is co-ordinated by the University
- 17 Volunteers on assignments arranged through the Students' Union will be invited to complete feedback forms on how they found their assignments and will be asked to return these to the Students' Union.
- 18 This policy does not cover volunteering for public duties such as a magistrate, local councillor or school governor, which are covered by the [Special Leave policy](#).

Volunteering offered by the Students' Union

- 19 Employees and groups/teams are offered the opportunity to do voluntary work with the support of the Students' Union and will need to apply in writing to their line manager. All volunteering requests will be considered in line with the operational needs of the School and/or Departments.
- 20 A full list of opportunities are available [here](#) and are also available from the Students' Union directly. Priority is given to students for projects offered by Bucks Students' Union.
- 21 Employees and groups/teams who would like to volunteer but who feel that current opportunities are not suitable can register their interest with Bucks Students' Union. They will be notified when a suitable opportunity becomes available.
- 22 All risk assessments will be undertaken by the Students' Union if employees are undertaking their volunteering activities with them.
- 23 Volunteers on assignments arranged through the Students' Union will be invited to complete feedback forms on how they found their assignments and will be asked to return these to the Students' Union.

Volunteering organised by the member of staff

- 24 Employees who wish to apply to undertake voluntary work outside of work in line with **point 14** should apply in writing to their line manager for consideration.
- 25 All risk assessments and DBS checks should be undertaken by the organisation where the employee is undertaking their volunteering activities. This should be provided to the University prior to volunteering activities being undertaken.

Volunteering activities coordinated by the University

- 26 Employees and groups/teams who wish to undertake voluntary work as part of teams/groups as part of a specific project can consider this through those opportunities offered by the Students' Union. Any applications for volunteering should be put in writing to the line manager for consideration in line with the operational needs of the School and/or Department.

- 27 If employees or groups/teams want to volunteer individually through opportunities available in the local community or a local regionally organised initiative through the University they should apply in writing to their line manager for consideration.
- 28 The types of voluntary work that may be available through these connections can include working with in partnership with our local schools or supporting local schools by taking your passion for raising aspirations of young people and combining it with skills and strategic thinking. These are great examples of getting involved and for those to give back to your local community.
- 29 All risk assessments in relation to health and safety and DBS checks will be undertaken by the University prior to any volunteering activity taking place where appropriate.

Health and Safety

- 30 The University will ensure that work activities exposing employees to unacceptable risks are eliminated as far as is reasonably practicable. Measures to achieve this include preventing exposure to such risks by ensuring that:
 - a relevant legal standards (dependent on the risk involved) are met;
 - b official guidance and good practice are followed;
 - c all accidents or dangerous occurrences are recorded on the Employee Portal via Bucks Employee Network (BEN).

Risk assessment

- 31 Where hazardous activities cannot be eliminated, risk assessments will need to be undertaken to identify residual risks and to reduce them to the lowest level reasonably practicable. The assessments must take into account the actual risks associated with the work activities and whether these risks are increased due to any particular circumstances associated with the volunteers.
- 32 It is the responsibility of the volunteering organisation to undertake the risk assessment and a copy of the risk assessment should be provided to the University.
- 33 If staff are undertaking volunteering activities organised by the University the risk assessment will be undertaken centrally by the line manager or Health and Safety Manager as appropriate and a Volunteering Risk Assessment Form will be made available.
- 34 The risk assessment should include the:
 - hazards identified
 - the volunteers at risk
 - risk rating/priority
 - existing and/or additional control measures
 - persons responsible for implementing the controls
 - review date

- 35 A copy of the risk assessment should be provided to the University. Where hazardous activities cannot be eliminated, risk assessments will need to be undertaken to identify residual risks and to reduce them to the lowest level reasonably practicable. The assessments must take into account the actual risks associated with the work activities and whether these risks are increased due to any particular circumstances associated with the volunteers.

Insurance

- 36 Our insurance provider, Zurich has confirmed that provided the person/s carrying out the volunteering have been given authorisation by the University, then they would be covered under the Zurich insurance. The University would need to ensure that suitable risk assessments are completed to include Public Liability insurance (where person/s are working) and that adequate controls have been put in place.

Conduct whilst Volunteering

- 37 Staff undertaking volunteering activities approved by the University are reminded that they will be representing the University and are therefore, bound by our policies and procedures in relation to their conduct and behaviour for the duration of the episode of volunteering.

Evaluation

- 38 Volunteers on assignments arranged through the Students' Union will be invited to complete feedback forms on how they found their assignments and will be asked to return these to the Students' Union.
- 39 On completion of the volunteering activity coordinated by the University, the member of staff will be asked to answer three simple questions which will be returned to the line manager in order for the department, school, HR or the University to review the benefits of volunteering.
- What volunteer work was undertaken and what were the benefits to the organisation or beneficiaries involved?
 - Please indicate the learning and development opportunities that you (employee) encountered from being part of this volunteering project.
 - Please comment on how you (employee) found the Staff Volunteering scheme and any ideas you have for how it could be improved.
- 40 An annual report will be submitted to UET/UMG and LJC to monitor the benefits of staff volunteering for the University and in the local community/region to meet our Civic commitment and corporate social responsibilities.