

Volunteering while Learning and Working

Policy and Procedural Guidelines

Introduction

This policy template and guidelines have been designed to build on existing practice in encouraging and facilitating student volunteering in Scotland's colleges. This document has been devised by a sub-group of The Developing Volunteering in Scotland's Colleges Group:

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The policy should enable colleges and learners to:

- understand how volunteering can help meet both college and learner aims, and
- outline the actions needed to help maximise the benefits volunteering can bring to both colleges and learners

It is anticipated that colleges will determine their own focus with regard to volunteering and identify which parts of the template are relevant for them. It is therefore anticipated that this template will be a starting point for colleges seeking to promote volunteering.

Defining volunteering

There is no legal definition of what a 'volunteer' is and the term is used by different sectors and different people to mean different things. However most definitions capture the following:

Volunteering is activity:

- undertaken by choice
- without monetary reward (other than expenses incurred)
- for the benefit of others or the environment, as well as for self.

From the 2004 Scottish Executive Volunteering Strategy:

Volunteering is the giving of time and energy through a third party, which can bring measurable benefits to the volunteer, individual beneficiaries, groups and organisations, communities, the environment and society at large. It is a choice undertaken of one's own free will, and is not motivated primarily for financial gain or for a wage or salary.

The United Nations states that 'Volunteering brings benefits to both society at large and the individual volunteer. It makes important contributions, economically as well as socially. It contributes to more cohesive societies by building trust and reciprocity among citizens.'

The UN categorises volunteering into four broad areas:

- mutual aid or self help
- philanthropy or service to others
- participation or civic engagement
- advocacy or campaigning

Work placements which are part of students programmes of study are not normally defined as volunteering as these placements are:

- an integral (mandatory) part of the programme
- a defined period of activity during which certain learning outcomes will be achieved.

Volunteering is normally defined as activity which is additional and complementary to formal study, and which gives students the opportunity to utilise existing skills and to develop new skills and attributes. These skills could be job specific but are perhaps more likely to be generic soft, transferable, employability, or essential skills. This is about students enjoying the benefits that volunteering offers them.

Volunteering is a learning activity in itself, either informal or formal, and can lead to part or full time study in college.

Good practice in volunteers' management recognises and facilitates reciprocal benefits for both volunteer and organisation and its clients or the environment. The key purpose statement for the management of volunteers, as defined in the national occupational standards for volunteers' managers, is to:

- 'enable volunteers to make their full contribution to the organisations' goals whilst developing their own skills and interests'.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to contribute to the development of a culture of volunteerism across all staff and learners in the college. It recognises and promotes the value that volunteering can bring in terms of enhancing the learning experience of students; the professional development of staff; and where developing volunteering can help achieve college aims in terms of citizenship, developing employability and essential skills, inclusion, and community involvement.
- 1.2 The policy should be understood in conjunction with other college policies and procedures, for example, equalities policy; student recruitment where volunteering is deemed relevant, or desirable, for entry to some courses of study; learning policy where volunteering can enhance specific programmes of study; personal development procedures where volunteering can help enhance the softer skills that students develop in college and enhance individual learning journeys and distance travelled.
- 1.3 The associated procedures will assist colleges in establishing collaborative associations with volunteering organisations in their communities, in particular working closely with the local Volunteer Centre, and in establishing robust student associations internally; to develop the following models of volunteering;
 - 1.3.1 Students volunteering internally for, or through, the student association to support its work, or the work of the college
 - 1.3.2 Students volunteering within the college to add value to the work of the college, eg. as literacy tutors
 - 1.3.3 Individuals from the wider community volunteering within the college to add value to the student experience and to achieving the aims and objectives of the college in its widest sense
 - 1.3.4 Students undertaking general volunteering roles in the wider community to enhance their personal attributes and essential skills development
 - 1.3.5 Students undertaking specific volunteering in the wider community to enhance their course learning
 - 1.3.6 Staff volunteering within the college environment to enhance their skills and experience in a particular area
 - 1.3.7 Staff volunteering in the wider community to enhance their skills and personal attributes

2. Policy Statements

- 2.1 The college is committed to providing all college learners with the encouragement to volunteer either internally for the college, or externally in the wider community.
- 2.2 The college is committed to help each student understand, articulate and capture evidence of the ways in which they have benefited from their volunteering.
- 2.3 The college is committed to encouraging staff to engage in volunteering activities.
- 2.4 The college is committed to helping staff, through appropriate systems, to capture learning and professional development gained as a result of volunteering.
- 2.5 The college is committed to identifying and promoting volunteering opportunities for people from the wider community to volunteer in the college and its outreach provision.
- 2.6 The college is committed to recognising the value of volunteering experience of prospective students at point of application and in recognising the value of volunteering for students in transition from community based learning to campus learning, from college to employment or onto higher education.

3 Rights and Responsibilities

- 3.1 The board of Management has the overall responsibility for ensuring the implementation of this policy and will welcome working with the Student Association to achieve this.
- 3.2 A senior member of staff will be given remit to drive the policy forward, together with input and support from the Student Association.
- 3.3 It is the responsibility of the college to provide:
 - 3.3.1 information to all students on volunteering opportunities available, both internally and externally, including opportunities for involvement with the Student Association, and as class representatives
 - 3.3.2 access to, or information on how to access, Volunteer Centre personnel to help match students to appropriate volunteering roles in the wider community that are with organisations that adhere to good practice in the management of volunteers, including payment of agreed expenses, appropriate insurance, induction, training, support, supervision, and recognition of volunteers
 - 3.3.3 information to staff about internal and external volunteering opportunities
 - 3.3.4 effective management of all internal volunteers (whether students, staff or external people from the community) which will include the following: adequate resources to cover agreed expenses, appropriate insurance, induction, training, volunteer agreements and role descriptions, support, supervision, and recognition of all volunteers
 - 3.3.5 opportunities and mechanisms for students to discuss and capture the learning, skills and development of personal attributes gained from their volunteering.
- 3.4 The college will ensure that all members of staff and all learners have access to this policy.
- 3.5 This policy will be reviewed regularly and as volunteering becomes an embedded activity in the college it will be evaluated with all other college activity.

Procedures

Collaborative working

Embedding a culture of volunteering in college can be supported by establishing effective collaborative working / partnerships with the local Volunteer Centre and identifying ways in which the VC could support the college in meeting its aims and objectives with regard to its volunteering policy. The following link gives contact details for the local volunteer centres which are located in every local authority area throughout the country.
<http://www.volunteerscotland.org.uk>

Volunteer Centres could provide:

- advice and training on good practice regarding all aspects of the management of volunteers (including payment of expenses)
- guidance and support in promoting volunteering within the college to both students and staff
- advice and guidance on volunteering opportunities in the community and matching students and staff to appropriate opportunities
- information on insurance
- information and advice on disclosure process
- advice and guidance regarding recognising and rewarding volunteers and their achievements
- additional support for student volunteers as required
- advice on community volunteering initiatives
- sharing of experience of volunteering and role models of volunteers who have benefited from engaging in volunteering activities

Helpful on-line resources

The national centre that supports volunteering in Scotland <http://www.vds.org.uk/>

Free online learning from VDS at <http://www.vdslearningzone.org.uk/>

Student Volunteer Scotland <http://www.studentvolscotland.org.uk/>

English national centre for volunteering, variety of resources and papers
<http://www.volunteering.org.uk/>

Awards which include accreditation for volunteering activities:

Youth Scotland, the network of youth groups in Scotland

<http://www.youthscotland.org.uk/>

ASDAN awards <http://www.asdan.org.uk/>

John Muir Award, <http://www.jmt.org/home.asp>

MV Awards for 16-25 year olds <http://www.millenniumvolunteers.gov.uk/>

Youth Achievement Awards

http://www.youthfed.org/YP_EA_Youth_Achievement_Awards.htm

Dynamic youth awards <http://www.youthscotland.org.uk/projects/dynamic-youth/dynamic-youth.htm>

Princes Trust <http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/>

Scouting Association <http://www.scouts.org.uk/>

Guiding association <http://www.girlguiding.org.uk/>

Sport leadership awards <http://www.sportsleaders.org/>

The media trust <http://www.voluntarymatters3.org/> resource includes case studies of different volunteering organisations, including how Homelink has introduced portfolio building with volunteers to help them recognise their skills.

Appendices – sample materials from colleges and student associations – this section will be developed over time as colleges develop and share their materials

- college volunteering agreements, volunteer timesheets
- portfolio/personal learning plan for capturing evidence of skills development as a result of engaging in volunteering activities
- role descriptors for volunteering roles in college and with student association
- case studies of current volunteering models in colleges

Annex 1

Overview that outlines the policy agendas and initiatives relevant to this template:

Volunteering in Scotland's Colleges, the report undertaken by SFEU on behalf of the Scottish Executive, March 2007, found that, 'While there is commendable activity related to volunteering in Scotland's colleges, current action on volunteer development is uneven.' And that, 'There is scope for improvement to maximise the benefits which volunteering can bring to students across all of the college sector.'

Skills for Scotland: a lifelong skills strategy, Scottish Government (2007)
'Youth work and volunteering opportunities offer young people the chance to develop confidence, motivation and skills that stay with them for life.'

Citizenship in Scotland's Colleges, HMIE (2006)
'Volunteering was widely recognised as a valuable vehicle through which learners could develop skills for citizenship and contribute effectively to their local communities in a practical and meaningful way.'

Delivering a Smarter Scotland: The Difference Scotland's Colleges Make to Learners, the Economy and Wider Society, Review of Scotland's Colleges Report on the Differences Colleges Make Working Group, Scottish Executive (2007)
'The benefits of volunteering to the individual volunteer, the local and wider society are now widely recognised in Scotland and we must use this to encourage people in colleges to engage in volunteering activities.'

A National Framework for Youth Action and Engagement: Report of the Russell Commission HMSO (2005)
'It should be commonplace for young people to volunteer whilst they are at school, college or in higher education.'

Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances, DFES (2006)
'Opportunities to undertake volunteering activities can enrich the learning experience in FE and promote active citizenship. Volunteering can enable students to develop the soft skills required by employers, strengthen providers' engagement with their local communities and help foster an inclusive ethos.'

Consultation Document: 16+ Learning Choices: First Step Activity and Financial Support, Scottish Government (2008)
'It is widely recognised that volunteering can provide skills and build confidence and therefore act as a stepping stone into further education, training or employment. Volunteering also helps people feel good about themselves and good about their communities, encourages networks and is especially effective at building 'soft' or 'entry level' skills such as problem solving and co-operative working.'

The UK Research Base

Young People's Volunteering and Skills Development: A research project undertaken by The National Youth Agency on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills from October 2006 to March 2007

The key findings:

- Young people identify for themselves a wide range of personal and social skills developed through volunteering, but opportunities to reflect on and articulate this learning are often underdeveloped.
- The fieldwork findings clearly support the evidence of the literature review that young people can and do increase their self-confidence and self-esteem, develop a range of communication skills and improve their ability to work with other people through volunteering.
- Volunteering can act as a catalyst for young people to engage more effectively with other learning, or in some cases re-engage with formal learning or training, putting them in a position where they can develop skills and potentially gain qualifications.
- Many young people also develop practical skills related to their specific experiences of volunteering.

This report recognised that volunteering can engage young people at all levels of achievement, from high achievers to those who are on the margins of society, with three key themes emerging strongly:

- the potential contribution of volunteering to young people's learning and skills development;
- the specific skills that young people identified and articulated;
- and the need for mechanisms to promote this learning and development.

In addition there are many research reports from The Institute of Volunteering Research, Volunteer Development Scotland, and others throughout the developed world that inform us that engaging in volunteering:

- has a positive effect on mental health
- breaks down barriers of social exclusion
- helps people develop a sense of personal worth, a sense of being valued, respected, of belonging, of being effective and making a difference to others.

Links to Curriculum for Excellence

The above research base demonstrates the ways in which engaging in volunteering enables people to develop the four capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence, and become:

- Successful learners with enthusiasm, motivation, openness to new ideas and thinking; able to use core skills and other learning in different settings.
- Confident individuals with self-respect, a sense of physical, mental and emotional well-being, ambition, values and beliefs; able to relate to others, manage themselves, be self-aware, develop and communicate their own beliefs, make informed decisions, and achieve success in different areas of activity.
- Responsible citizens with respect for others, commitment to participate responsibly in communities; and able to develop knowledge and understanding of the world, of different beliefs, and cultures; develop informed ethical views of complex issues.
- Effective contributors with an enterprising attitude, resilience, self-reliance; and able to communicate in different ways and in different settings, work effectively in teams, take initiative and lead, develop critical thinking in new contexts, solve problems.