



Staff Volunteering

Process

Aston Staff Volunteering Process

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Scope of policy

This process applies to all Aston University Staff Volunteers, in all projects approved by the University and to any brokerage service offered to local community groups who wish to recruit volunteers directly.

Definition of a Staff Volunteer

In this context, a staff volunteer is an employee of Aston University who, without compensation, other than the reimbursement of expenses, engages in tasks, approved by the University, to the benefit of the local community, including the University itself. For external activities, a volunteer must be employed by the University and have attended an induction session, covering health and safety issues, rights and responsibilities.

Volunteering and our role as a civic university

The University regards volunteering as a key contributor to its strategic aims within its beneficiary-led strategy. Volunteering opportunities will normally be with organisations which have charitable status and which have registered with the university as a “volunteering partner”. In the short term they will also be organisations which impact upon communities in the immediate vicinity of the Aston campus (no wider than the geographical area falling under the control of Birmingham City Council) and that align with Aston’s Civic University Agreement themes of Health and Wellbeing, Inclusion and Reducing Inequality, Support for Business, Sustainability and Environment, Crime and Justice or Education and Employment).

External organisations will normally need to fulfil the following requirements in order to become a volunteering partner:

- Adequate insurance cover for volunteers
- Appropriate health and safety procedures including risk assessments, the provision of safe equipment and safety clothing
- Funding for reasonable expenses incurred by volunteers, e.g. travel
- Effective supervision
- A commitment to equal opportunities.

Volunteer rights and responsibilities

- Volunteers will be given support and guidance by either the university or the organisation offering the volunteering opportunity to ensure that: Appropriate induction and training is provided
- Appropriate safety equipment and clothing is provided
- Risk assessments are carried out and publicised
- Appropriate supervision and review mechanisms are in place.

Volunteers will be expected to adhere with data protection laws and maintain confidentiality as a University staff member. External organisations may wish to establish the suitability of volunteers by, for example, interviewing candidates. Staff Volunteers may also be required to undergo prescribed training provided by the external organisation, intended to equip volunteers to carry out their role effectively and safely.

Paid time off for registered volunteers

The University has agreed that staff who are registered under the Staff Volunteering Scheme will be eligible for a basic allocation of the equivalent of 2 working days paid time off each year, to undertake approved volunteering work. A further provision of up to 2 working days per annum may be granted, subject to the member of staff matching any additional amount from their annual leave or accrued flexi-leave. Prior to undertaking volunteering a request for volunteering leave must be entered onto the Core HR system and be approved by the line manager. Paid time off will always be subject to the agreement of the line manager and will be subject to the needs of the Colleges/Department.

It is likely that some local volunteering activity could be undertaken during a lunch or extended lunch time period or before/after work. Volunteers will not be reimbursed for any of their free time they may wish to devote to such activities. Paid time off may be calculated in annualised hours which would equate to 15 hours per annum (pro-rated for part-time staff), for the basic provisions and 7.5 hours for each additional day. From time to time, the Executive may approve a special Community Challenge type activity for which additional paid time off may be approved, beyond the normal annual provision, usually no more than two days.

Expectations of volunteers

All volunteers participating in the programme will be expected to agree to the terms of this process and the Volunteer Charter prior to participating in the scheme.

Disclosure & Barring Service checks

Some external organisations, for example, those working with children or vulnerable adults may require their volunteers to undergo DBS checks. Such checks will normally be carried out by the external organisation itself.

Reimbursement of expenses

Volunteers will be eligible for reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred whilst undertaking approved volunteering activities. These should normally be claimed from the external organisation, but any problems should be raised with your line manager.

Insurance cover

All external organisations using Aston Staff Volunteers must be able to demonstrate they have appropriate and adequate insurance cover in place. The University also has employer and public liability insurance cover.

Recognition of staff volunteering activity

Volunteering will be recognised by being explicitly included in the criteria for academic promotion and as a Citizenship activity/impact on beneficiaries in individual's My Development Conversation.

Aston Staff Volunteering Scheme Charter

The University commits to:

- Support all volunteers to fulfil personal and professional aims connected to volunteering within the remit of the scheme.
- Offer support, information and feedback that is clear and useful from initial registration of interest, throughout the placement and after a placement ends.
- Never pressurise staff to take a placement or commit more time than they feel comfortable giving.
- Provide access to initial training to provide a basic understanding of what being a volunteer means and to establish rights and responsibilities
- Respect, value and listen to the needs of all volunteers.
- Ensure and monitor that all organisations meet the appropriate standards i.e. meet health and safety requirements, have adequate insurance cover and all placements have been risk assessed.
- Provide information on organisations that offer volunteer placements.
- Evaluate the scheme and placements in order to offer volunteers the best possible experience.
- Support volunteers through any problems or concerns they may have regarding a placement.

Volunteers to agree to:

- Be aware that whilst on volunteering placements staff are present as employees of Aston University and therefore all of the Aston University Policies and Procedures must still be adhered to.
- Carry out placements within health and safety and risk assessment guidelines as specified by the voluntary organisation and/or Aston University.
- Be clear about availability and give notice if this changes.
- Give reasonable notice if withdrawing from a voluntary placement or from the scheme in general.
- Report accidents, incidents and problems to the designated person at the placement and your Line Manager.
- Address any complaints about a placement to your Line Manager
- Maintain confidentiality procedures. Discuss information of a confidential nature only with the designated person of the organisation.
- When working with young people and vulnerable adults to maintain professional boundaries in-line with the specific rules of the volunteer organisation and within Aston's employment guidelines.
- Attend training where possible and support other volunteers.

For further information on staff volunteering please contact spo@aston.ac.uk.

Author and owner:

Date implemented:

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