

“Volunteering makes you feel good about yourself and it’s good for other people”

How do I get involved in volunteering?

The UCSU volunteering platform is a great way to search for places to volunteer based on your interests and the skills you’d like to develop. You can apply directly through the website so please only apply to opportunities you feel you could commit to. You can always apply for others at a later date if it’s not quite what you were looking for. If you come across an opportunity that you like the sound of and it isn’t in your area please email suvolunteering@cumbria.ac.uk and we can look into similar opportunities closer to you. You can also email or phone us on 01228616164 to discuss the types of volunteering you’d like to do and if you’re not sure where to start we can give you some advice.

Interview, References & DBS checks

Organisations will often ask you to fill out a volunteer application form, carry out an informal interview with you and follow up two character references. If you plan to support children, young people and/or vulnerable adults, a DBS (Disclosure Baring Service) criminal background check would be needed (free for volunteers). All this may take time to process before you are able to start volunteering with the organisation, however you can get involved in other projects whilst you wait to get started.

UCSU Volunteering runs one off/one day volunteering events and our own projects that you can do in addition to regular volunteering. These give you a taster of volunteering in all different areas and often won’t require a DBS check or References.

Make Sure you ‘Opt in’ to Communications

To receive our monthly volunteering bulletin outlining the latest opportunities, including project days and training opportunities, please make sure you ‘opt in’ for UCSU communications. You can amend this when you log in to our website, in ‘My Details’ on your account/profile.

Time to volunteer

There are lots of different **voluntary roles** to fit in with your lifestyle. Be open and honest about the times you are free and available to volunteer. It will depend on the organisation but there are opportunities to volunteer from as little as an hour a week and you can get involved in short or long term opportunities. There are also lots of opportunities to volunteer with an organisation for a one off volunteering day which is a great way to do something totally different without any longer term commitment.

Volunteer Commitments

Once you are volunteering it’s important to let your organisation know if you are unwell or unable to meet your volunteering commitments. It’s really important you are happy in your voluntary role and should you have any issues please speak to your point of contact/supervisor to discuss how it could be better for you. It may just be that the role isn’t right for you, which is ok, but it’s polite to let them know and we can then help you find something you’ll find more enjoyable and beneficial.

Training and Support

UCSU Volunteering would like you to let us know how you’re getting on with your volunteering and should you need to discuss any aspects of volunteering, we’re here to help. We will also let you know of other opportunities to get involved in and training opportunities, which may include computer, communication or confidence building skills.

Many organisations offer some initial training and on-going support and supervision. It is important to establish who your key contact person is whilst at your place of volunteering, so you know who to go to for support or with queries.

What counts as volunteering?

When thinking about what counts as volunteering just think – Is this time I’m spending going to benefit others in some way? The following are all part of your volunteering:

- Travelling time to and from your voluntary activity (you need to travel to be able to volunteer so this definitely counts – even if it takes a while).
- Time spent carrying out your specific voluntary role and associated tasks.
- Meetings related to your voluntary role.
- Pre-activity preparation time for example planning a coaching session.
- Time spent on any paperwork or administration for your voluntary role.
- Time spent on training, including courses such as developing communication skills and confidence building.
- Research/reading time, for example reading about working with young people when going to volunteer at a youth club.
- All the time spent with the Volunteer Team at the Students’ Union or local volunteer centre.
- Time spent with your supervisor/point of contact in your voluntary role.

Expenses

Most organisations reimburse ‘out of pocket’ volunteer expenses, including travel fares, but it is always better to ask before you start volunteering, as some organisations do not have sufficient funds to cover this. Do not let this be a barrier for you as there will always be a relevant volunteering opportunity that can support your expenses.

For all volunteering enquiries please email **Kati Brown** | suvolunteering@cumbria.ac.uk
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