



FAQ Guide for Organisations

With almost 16,000 members from 120 countries, Imperial College Union is the students' union for Imperial College London's students.

What is Community Connections?

Community Connections is Imperial College Union's volunteer service connecting our members to local community volunteering opportunities and those further afield.

Community Connections will advertise local volunteering opportunities to our members with the aim of increasing engagement in volunteering and the community.

What does Imperial College Union define as volunteering?

Imperial College Union aligns its definition of volunteering to that provided by Volunteering England (below).

"We define volunteering as any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. This can include formal activity undertaken through public, private and voluntary organisations as well as informal community participation"*.

What type of volunteering opportunities are we able to advertise through Community Connections?

Through Community Connections both regularly occurring and one off volunteer roles can be advertised plus mass volunteering activities. We advertise volunteering opportunities that will either draw on our members existing knowledge and expertise, or enable them to develop new skills and gain new experiences in volunteering roles that will help them to develop either personally or professionally.

How will volunteering opportunities be promoted?

Your volunteer roles will be promoted in a range of ways so that Imperial students can find out about the opportunities available to them.

An advert will be placed for each volunteer role on the Community Connections volunteering pages of the Imperial College Union website. Opportunities will also be listed in our fortnightly e-bulletin which will be sent out to all students who have registered an interest in volunteering via Community Connections.

Community Connection Partners are invited to attend the annual Community Connections Volunteer Fair to promote their volunteer roles directly to students. Updates will also be sent out through our social media networks such as twitter and Facebook.

* Reference: www.volunteering.org.uk/iwantovolunteer/what-is-volunteering

How soon will our volunteer roles be advertised to students?

Once we have received and approved your volunteer role we will endeavour to have this available to students via our website within three working days. You will be notified when your opportunity is on our website.

Why do students volunteer?

Volunteering provides many benefits to students, both professionally and personally. By engaging in community volunteering students are able to develop key skills, gain new experiences and meet new people. Taking part in voluntary activities gives students a different university experience which will not only benefit themselves but the community in which they live and study.

When are students available to volunteer?

There are almost 16,000 students at Imperial College London so individual timetables will differ. With almost 44% of students undertaking Postgraduate study there are students here all year round.

Is there a best time to recruit new volunteers?

The start of a new academic year is a great opportunity to connect with students when they may be looking to try new things. We hold an annual Community Connections Volunteer Fair in October which gives Community Connections Partners the chance to meet our students to promote their organisation and volunteer roles directly to them.

January sees the start of a new year where students return to College feeling more settled so may be interested in expanding their experiences and taking on a new venture in the spring/summer term.

How long will it take for students to start volunteering with us?

Once your opportunity is listed on our website students will be able to access the information of how to apply for your volunteer roles. Volunteers can begin as soon as their application is approved by your organisation and you have completed any required background checks (e.g. DBS checks).

We are looking for a team of volunteers for a one-off activity, can Community Connections help?

Yes. If you have an activity which would benefit from the support of a team of volunteers then it would be great to hear about it. We are looking to hold Mass Volunteering activities each month engaging 5, 10, 20+ members at a time in fun and rewarding activities throughout the year. If you would like to discuss further, please email volunteering@imperial.ac.uk.

Mass Volunteering events can be promoted alongside our existing campaigns. Give it Go runs twice a year providing students with 'taster' activities with our clubs, societies and volunteering activities. Stress Less, in January and the summer term, is a campaign that looks to reduce students' stress during exam periods by holding various activities that provide a well-deserved break from studying. Student Volunteering Week, a national initiative taking place each February, aims to get more students volunteering.

We have one-off opportunities, how can we advertise these?

One-off opportunities will be advertised on our Community Connection webpages.

Students will be able to sign up to take part by completing an online registration form and we can keep you updated on the number of individuals expected to take part. One-off volunteering events can also be published as a news story on our website and feature in our fortnightly e-bulletins which will be sent out to all students registered with Community Connections.

Our organisation is based outside of London; can we become a Community Connections Partner?

We are looking to find volunteering opportunities which are accessible to Imperial College Union members. We have several campuses across London and also Silwood Park campus in Berkshire.

We are a profit making organisation, can we still promote volunteering opportunities?

No. We will only promote volunteering opportunities with charities and not for profit organisations or social enterprises that reinvest their profits back in to their business or the community that they serve.

Can we advertise an unpaid internship or work experience?

No, we are only looking to promote volunteering opportunities to our students. A policy was passed by our Union Council concerning Unpaid Internships and it can be found here: imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/policies/68/file.

We have international volunteering opportunities; can we advertise these through Community Connections?

Yes. We are happy to advertise International Volunteering opportunities to our members where they are engaged in volunteering projects that are sustainable and will have a positive impact on the local community they are visiting.

Where volunteers are required to raise funds to be able to travel and participate in an international volunteering opportunity, the host organise will provide advice, guidance and support to the individual in order for them to raise the necessary funds.

Can we send promotional materials to Imperial College Union to distribute to students?

As we do not have a volunteer drop-in centre for students we are unlikely to be able to distribute flyers throughout the year. There will be an opportunity to showcase your organisation and volunteering opportunities at the annual Community Connections Volunteer Fair.

Can we visit Imperial College Union to promote opportunities to students on campus?

Partners will be invited to attend our annual Community Connections Volunteer Fair held at the start of the academic year. The fair will give you the opportunity to meet students face to face and promote your volunteer roles to them directly.

To engage directly with students at any other time of the year, please contact Union staff by emailing volunteering@imperial.ac.uk to discuss further.

To volunteer with our organisation, volunteers need to have a DBS check, who is responsible for arranging this?

It is the responsibility of the organisation to arrange for appropriate DBS checks on volunteers engaging with them and to ensure volunteers are aware of any safeguarding policies of the organisation.

To volunteer with our organisation, volunteers need to have specific training, who is responsible for arranging this?

It is the responsibility of the organisation to arrange any training that is required for volunteers to fulfil their role.

What do we do if we encounter issues or problems with a volunteer from Imperial College Union? (e.g. volunteer doesn't turn up to session)

If you experience any issues with volunteers that you feel we need to be aware of please contact Nick Snow, Student Development Manager (n.snow@imperial.ac.uk).

The student volunteering with our organisation is completing Imperial Plus, what do we have to do?

There is no expectation on Partner organisations to do anything in relation to volunteers working towards Imperial Plus Volunteer Certificate or Volunteer Accreditation.

Imperial Plus is an opportunity for volunteers to gain recognition for the time they spend in their voluntary roles and reflect on the skills they learn and develop through volunteering. Volunteers will log their hours online which is submitted to Imperial College Union staff for approval. Volunteers must provide the email address of someone who can verify the time they have logged, which may mean they provide the details of their contact within your organisation. It is unlikely that we would need to check but on the very rare occasion, we may ask you to confirm the time a volunteer has spent with your organisation.

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