



**Board of Trustees
One-Page Summary – Volunteers Policy**

AGENDA ITEM NO.	8
TITLE	Volunteers Policy
AUTHOR	Phil Power, Membership Services Manager
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	Volunteer opportunities at the Union are diverse and substantial, in the previous academic year the Union engaged around 2400 students as volunteers in Union activities. A definition of volunteers in the context of the Union is provided; this definition does not extend to those who are solely a member of a Club, Society or Project. The policy draw together the organisations approach and procedures for activities involving volunteers. Having a Volunteers Policy is a requirement of the Investing in Volunteers standard.
PURPOSE	The purpose of this policy is to provide overall guidance and direction to volunteers and staff engaged in activities involving volunteers and volunteer management. This policy applies to all those undertaking a volunteer role with Imperial College Union, and outlines requirements on organisations offering volunteering opportunities through Community Connections. The policy seeks to clarify and consolidate in one place the Union's reasons for engaging volunteers, the principal routes of recruitment, selection, training and development of volunteers, as well as the organisation's expectations of its volunteers.
RISK IMPLICATIONS	This policy seeks to draw together the Union's approaches in this area, to enable the messages to be clearly communicated to the increasing number of students who undertake a volunteering role within the Union. The policy is a requirement of the Investing in Volunteers standard, furthermore communicating the contents of the policy to our volunteers will be critical in achieving the standard.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	No direct expenditure is proposed from the approval of this policy.
LEGAL REVIEW REQUIRED?	No
DECISION/ACTION REQUIRED	Approval of the policy.

VOLUNTEERS POLICY

1. Background

1.1. Imperial College Union recognises that engagement with volunteers is essential to the realisation of the organisation's vision, mission and strategic plan, together with the delivery of many of the organisation's activities which are recognisable by members, the College and the wider world.

1.2. Many of the objectives in the Union's strategic plan rely on the engagement of volunteers in the work of the Union. They are fundamental to what the organisation does.

1.3. Volunteer opportunities at the Union are diverse and substantial. These opportunities can allow an individual to personally develop, pursue specific or general interests, contribute to representation of the College, engage with other organisations, forge links with community groups, advocate on behalf of others, raise awareness of situations or causes, meet like minded individuals or have a rewarding and enjoyable time while a member of the Union.

1.4. During the 2013/14 academic year the Union has engaged over 2400 members in over 3000 volunteer roles.

1.5. Volunteers make an important and valuable contribution to the overall work of the Union. The wide range of skills, expertise and commitment they bring enables the Union to provide activities and services which would be unimaginable without them.

2. Purpose

2.1. The purpose of this policy is to provide overall guidance and direction to volunteers and staff engaged in activities involving volunteers and volunteer management.

2.2. This policy applies to all those undertaking a volunteer role with Imperial College Union.

2.3. It should be noted that the Union's Community Connections scheme¹ also seeks to place volunteers with other organisations through a bureau service. The Union will endeavour to ensure that these organisations operate policies and practices in accordance with the principles set out in this policy when evaluating potential opportunities.

2.4. Imperial Plus² is open to students who volunteer through various schemes offered by the College. The Union will endeavour to ensure that these volunteering schemes operate policies and practices in accordance with the principles set out in this policy.

2.5. Volunteering England's definition³ can be used as a basis to define what we consider volunteering in the context of the Union.

2.5.1. For the purposes of the Union volunteers are defined as those members who undertake any activity recognised by the Union that involves spending time, unpaid and not for formal academic credit, doing something that aims to benefit the environment, College or local community or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual member.

2.6. The volunteering opportunities provided by the Union currently include, but are not necessarily limited to:

2.6.1. Trustees

¹ imperialcollegeunion.org/volunteering

² imperialcollegeunion.org/imperialplus

³ <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/iwanttovolunteer/what-is-volunteering>

- 2.6.2. Members of Union Council
- 2.6.3. Committee members of Clubs, Societies & Projects
- 2.6.4. Rep roles within the Academic Representation Network
- 2.6.5. Roles within the various Management Groups
- 2.6.6. Liberation Officers
- 2.6.7. Members operating Student-Led Campaigns
- 2.6.8. Members registered as part of Community Connections
- 2.6.9. Members taking part in #HelloicuCrew

2.7. A number of the Union's members are aged under 18. A specific policy⁴ exists outlining which volunteer roles these members may undertake.

3. Principles of volunteer engagement

3.1. The following principles are adopted by the Union with respect to activities involving volunteers.

3.1.1. The Union is committed to engaging volunteers in its work and values their contribution to the organisation.

3.1.2. The Union is proud of the diversity of the student community and will support this through its voluntary activities and recognised groups.

3.1.3. The Union is committed to protecting volunteers from discrimination and harm, whether physical, financial or emotional.

3.1.4. The Union will provide information about the nature of each volunteer role, and develop the range and nature of opportunities which are available.

3.1.5. The Union appreciates that some volunteer roles may have specific requirements or checks which must be carried out prior to commencement.

3.1.6. The Union will ensure fair, efficient and consistent recruitment, election and dismissal procedures.

3.1.7. The Union will help to introduce new volunteers to their role, the organisation, its work, policies, practices and people; as well as providing ongoing training and personal development opportunities.

3.1.8. The Union will not use volunteers or develop volunteer roles to undertake tasks which are more appropriately carried out by paid staff. Any internship style opportunities will only be promoted if they are in accordance with the Union's Unpaid Internships Policy⁵.

3.1.9. The Union recognises that different voluntary activities and recognised groups need varying levels and styles of support and supervision. As such, the Union will endeavour to tailor appropriate services.

3.1.10. The Union will endeavour to provide adequate resources to support voluntary activities and recognised groups.

3.1.11. The Union expects its staff at all levels to work positively with volunteers, and where appropriate, involve them in their work.

3.1.12. The Union will recognise, accredit and appreciate the involvement of volunteers and the contribution they make through publicity, awards and schemes including Imperial Plus.

3.1.13. The Union is mindful that volunteering is an addition to academic life which must take priority and will not place undue pressure on those undertaking volunteer roles.

4. Recruitment, selection and dismissal

4.1. In general all volunteering opportunities are available to all members of the Union and are normally renewable annually.

4.2. One of the Union's values is to be democratic; at all levels students are empowered to influence and change the workings of the Union. For this reason a significant number of opportunities

⁴ <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/policies/92>

⁵ <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/policies/68>

are subject to election by and from a certain constituency of members. Constituencies can either be predetermined with a dependency on student status or opt-in. Procedures for elections are contained within Bye Laws F and G⁶.

4.3. Where a recruitment and selection process is used for appointing to a volunteer role a person specification will be made available. The process will be undertaken in accordance with the Union's policy on appointment of volunteers for roles⁷.

4.4. Any further requirements for undertaking a volunteer role will be outlined in the role description.

4.5. Role Descriptions will be available for each volunteer role and contain a complete and current description of the duties and responsibilities of that role. This role description should also include the normal location of the opportunity and time commitment of the role if appropriate.

4.6. The Union will maintain an up to date record of the mandatory and optional training associated to each volunteer role

4.7. The Union will maintain details of who the relevant volunteer line manager and/or staff support is. These contact details are passed to volunteers as their main point of contact.

4.8. For opportunities offered by other organisations through the Community Connections, equivalent information to that required in the role description for a Union opportunity will be required before the role is promoted. Furthermore the organisations will be asked to sign the Community Connections Partner Agreement which confirms they:

4.8.1. Accept liability for all Imperial College Union members volunteering with their organisation, ensuring they are able to meet any liabilities through an adequate insurance policy or through other provision

4.8.2. Have a health and safety policy in place

4.8.3. Will undertake any necessary Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks that are required

4.8.4. Have an adequate and current child protection policy, briefing Imperial College Union members as necessary if working with children and young people

4.8.5. Have an adequate and current working with vulnerable adult's policy, briefing Imperial College Union members as necessary if working with vulnerable adults

4.8.6. Have an equal opportunities statement or policy.

4.8.7. Will properly risk assess all volunteering activities and premises, making documentation available to the Union if required

4.8.8. Will provide the training necessary for Imperial College Union members to carry out their assigned volunteer tasks

4.9. The Union holds no formal responsibility for the 'recruitment' of a volunteer into an opportunity offered through Community Connections but offered by another organisation. The member is subject to the recruitment and selection procedures of that organisation, but it is expected that the organisation undergoes a fair and accessible recruitment and selection process. If an organisation wishes to advertise a role which is restricted by a protected characteristic then this must be agreed through written confirmation with the Union beforehand.

⁶ <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/constitution-and-regulations>

⁷ To write

4.10. The Union reserves the right to refuse to promote an opportunity through Community Connections where it is felt that effective use will not be made of volunteers skills and abilities, or where it appears the placement may be unsafe or unsuitable.

4.11. Procedures for the removal of members from many volunteer roles are contained within Bye Law E⁸, with specific procedures relating to Clubs, Societies & Projects given in the Clubs, Societies & Projects policy⁹ and procedures for Trustees¹⁰.

4.12. For an opportunity offered by another organisation through Community Connections responsibility for removing individuals from these roles lies with the organisation.

4.13. Any member is able to resign from any volunteer role at any point. Where practicable support will be provided by a volunteer line manager or staff member to handover responsibilities to another volunteer.

5. Training, development and recognition

5.1. Unless specified in the role description, volunteers need no previous training, experience or qualifications to undertake a role within the Union. Opportunities offered through Community Connections may have requirements for specific previous training, experience or qualifications.

5.2. All volunteers will have a handbook available to them which contains information about the Union, its policies and its practices which are relevant to all volunteers¹¹.

5.3. The Union will provide training opportunities which are tailored to each volunteer role; this may include written materials and eLearning. Some training will be mandatory and may include a validation test to ensure the subject matter has been understood suitably.

5.4. Any other organisation offering opportunities through Community Connections will be responsible for providing appropriate induction and training for individuals taking up those roles. The Union will ensure that external organisations have suitable arrangements in place.

5.5. Imperial Plus shall be open to any member undertaking a volunteering role offered by the Union, through Community Connections or through other selected schemes operated by the College. Imperial Plus includes aspects of both training and recognition. The Imperial Plus Qualification is open to those undertaking key volunteer roles.

5.6. The Union will seek feedback of all online training manuals and in person workshops and briefing sessions to ensure the training provided to volunteers is fit for purpose, equipping volunteers with the knowledge and skills to carry out their role.

5.7. The Union Awards programme seeks to recognise volunteers for the whole spectrum of the Union's activities.

⁸ <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/constitution-and-regulations>

⁹ <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/policies/44>

¹⁰ <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/policies/71>

¹¹ Currently called Key Information – <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/training/all-volunteers/key-information>

6. Support

6.1. The Union aims to ensure that barriers to taking up volunteer roles are recognised and where possible removed. Volunteer opportunities are offered and operated in accordance with the Union's Equal Opportunities Policy¹².

6.2. The Union recognises it has a Duty of Care to ensure volunteers undertake their roles in a safe environment. The Union has a Health & Safety Policy¹³ which applies to those undertaking volunteer roles and it is expected that all those undertaking and supporting volunteer roles comply with this policy.

6.3. Public Liability insurance is generally automatically provided for all members undertaking a volunteering role offered by the Union.

6.4. Where volunteers are undertaking a role offered by another organisation through Community Connections it is the responsibility of that organisation to arrange appropriate insurance. The Union will ensure that organisations have suitable arrangements in place.

6.5. The Union will support volunteers working directly with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults in an Imperial College Union volunteer role to apply for their DBS checks.

6.6. Volunteers are eligible for the reimbursement of reasonable expenses which relate directly to costs incurred relating to the activity being undertaken. Normally travel to and from activities, subsistence and entertaining costs are not directly reimbursable for volunteers, though subsidises may be available.

6.7. A specific policy¹⁴ on volunteer expenses is available, together with information on how to make claims.

6.8. All volunteers are able to make use of the facilities provided by the Student Activities Centre at South Kensington.

6.9. Volunteers who have concerns or grievances about the Union's staff or Officers should follow the complaints procedures laid down in Bye Law E¹⁵.

6.10. Volunteers who feel they may have concerns or grievances about opportunities offered by other organisations through Community Connections should contact the Student Development Manager in the first instance.

7. Representation of the Union

7.1. Actions which could be perceived as representation of the Union may include, but are not limited to, public statement to the press, collaborations or joint ventures, or any agreements involving contractual or financial obligations. Policies and procedures exist particularly in the case of financial and contractual obligations.

7.2. Prior to any action or statement that might significantly affect or obligate the Union; volunteers are requested to seek consultation and approval from the relevant Union Staff member or Sabbatical Officer.

8. Record keeping

¹² <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/policies/83>

¹³ <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/policies/86>

¹⁴ Needs writing

¹⁵ <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/constitution-and-regulations>

8.1. Details of members of the Union are kept using the Union's record systems. Data pertaining to an individual's student record is provided by the College.

8.2. Information about a member's volunteer role(s), including training information, awards, progress with Imperial Plus and other relevant information is kept on the same system.

8.3. Records are only accessible to staff and lead volunteers who directly support those volunteers.

8.4. A member's permission shall be sought before details are disclosed to an external organisation, except where to withhold information would leave the Union liable to prosecution.

9. Expectations

9.1. In terms of delivering our services to volunteers it is useful to outline expectations of both the individuals undertaking the roles and what they can expect from the Union.

9.2. The Union expects volunteers:

9.2.1. To treat others with respect and courtesy, act in a manner which is appreciative of the wide diversity within the Union's membership, and not discriminate against others on any grounds.

9.2.2. To be an ambassador for the Union and the College, bringing neither into potential disrepute and maintain good relations with the external community.

9.2.3. To perform their volunteering role to the best of their ability, undertaking the tasks within the role description and to be clear and upfront if they are experiencing problems or difficulties undertaking the role.

9.2.4. To follow the Union's policies and procedures, including Equal Opportunities, Health & Safety, and Finance.

9.2.5. To respond to emails and other messages within a reasonable timeframe and to attend on time, or give reasonable notice to cancel or rearrange meetings.

9.2.6. To have a willingness to learn, to undertake all mandatory training as part of their volunteering role and make a commitment to undertake relevant optional training.

9.3. Volunteers can expect the Union:

9.3.1. To treat them with respect and courtesy, and act in a manner which is appreciative of the wide diversity within the Union's membership.

9.3.2. To provide a role description for their volunteering role as well as training, support, and resources to help them undertake the role.

9.3.3. To provide online and in-person services to support individuals undertaking volunteer roles.

9.3.4. To promote their activities, achievements and successes in line with the Union's guidance on publicity; and to undertake recognition schemes such as the Union Awards and Imperial Plus.

9.3.5. To respond to your emails, messages and requests within a reasonable timeframe.

9.3.6. To be mindful of academic life and not make requests which are potentially detrimental to academic success.

9.3.7. To investigate complaints within an appropriate timeframe and keep complainants informed as to progress.