

Approved by:	Board of Trustees
Date of approval:	15 July 2024
Implementation date:	1 August 2024
Review date (<i>no later than</i>):	1 August 2027
Responsible for implementation:	Chief Executive
Responsible for interpretation:	Board of trustees

Volunteers Policy

1.0 Background

- 1.1 City St George's Students' Union (the 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 University and the general public.
- 1.2. Many of the objectives in the Union's strategic plan rely on the engagement of volunteers in the work of the Union. Volunteers thus play a fundamental role in the Union's operations and activities.
- 1.3. Volunteer opportunities at the Union are diverse and substantial. These opportunities promote personal development; the pursuit of specific or general interests; student representation within the University and the public representation of the Union; engagement with other organisations; cooperation and partnership with community groups; advocacy on behalf of those unable to represent themselves; an awareness of events, the public sphere, and public, political, social or charitable causes; networking and the engagement with a diverse range of individuals; and rewarding and enjoyable work for members of the Union.
- 1.4. 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 impossible without them.

2.0 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 the Union and staff members charged with their supervision.
- 2.3 Volunteering England's definition will be used as a basis to define what we consider volunteering in the context of the Union.
- 2.4 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, University or local community or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Volunteering will be a choice freely made by each volunteer.

2.5 The voluntary positions offered by the Union currently include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- (a) Trustee
- (b) Member of the Union Council
- (c) Member of a Student Group Committee & Student-Led Project Leader
- (d) Programme Representative
- (e) Part-Time Student Officer
- (f) Member operating Student-Led Campaigns
- (g) Member operating Student Media

3.0 Principles of the Volunteer Engagement

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

- (a) The Union is committed to engaging volunteers in its work and values their contribution to the organisation.
- (b) The Union is proud of the diversity of the student community and will support this through its voluntary activities and recognised groups.
- (c) The Union is committed to protecting volunteers from discrimination and harm, whether physical, financial or emotional.
- (d) The Union will provide information about the nature of each volunteer role, and develop the range and nature of opportunities which are available.
- (e) The Union appreciates that some volunteer roles may have specific requirements or checks which will be carried out prior to commencement.
- (f) The Union will implement fair, efficient and consistent recruitment, election and dismissal procedures.
- (g) 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.
- (h) The Union will not use volunteers or develop volunteer roles to undertake tasks which are already within the remit and responsibilities of salaried staff.
- (i) 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 its approach to the needs of its members.
- (j) The Union will endeavour to provide adequate resources to support voluntary activities and recognised groups.
- (k) The Union expects its staff at all levels to work positively with volunteers, and where appropriate, involve them in their work.
- (l) The Union will recognise, accredit and appreciate the involvement of volunteers and the contribution they make through publicity, awards and schemes.
- (m) The Union is mindful that volunteering is an addition to academic life and will not place undue pressure on voluntary personnel where such

pressure would jeopardise their academic life or otherwise strain their personal commitments.

4.0 Recruitment, Selection and Dismissal

- 4.1 In general, all volunteering opportunities will be made available to all members of the Union.
- 4.2 At all levels, students will be empowered to influence and change the workings of the Union. For this reason, a significant number of opportunities 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 the Union's Elections Bye-Law.
- 4.3 Where a recruitment and selection process is used for appointing to a volunteer role a person specification will be made available.
- 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 which will 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 will be passed to volunteers as their main point of contact.
- 4.8 For opportunities offered by other organisations shared through Union channels, information of an equivalent standard to that provided for Union roles will be supplied to the Union before the role is promoted.
- 4.9 Procedures for the removal of members from volunteer roles are contained within the Union's Memorandum and Articles of Association, Bye-Laws and supporting Regulations.
- 4.10 Any member may resign from any volunteer role at any point. Where practicable, support will be provided by a volunteer line manager or staff member to hand over responsibilities to another volunteer.

5.0 Training, Development and Recognition

- 5.1 Unless specified in the role description, volunteers will not require previous training, experience or qualifications to undertake a role within the Union.

- 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 volunteers.
- 5.3 Where appropriate, 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 The Union will seek feedback on its online training manuals and on its workshops and briefing sessions to ensure that the training provided to volunteers is fit for purpose, equipping volunteers with the knowledge and skills to carry out their role.
- 5.5 The Union will recognise volunteers for the whole spectrum of the Union's activities.

6.0 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 Equality and Diversity Policy.
- 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 Policy 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 will generally be automatically provided for all members undertaking a volunteering role offered by the Union.
- 6.4 The Union will support volunteers working directly with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults in a Union volunteer role to apply for their DBS checks.
- 6.5 Volunteers will be 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 subsidies may be available.
- 6.6 A specific policy on volunteer expenses will be available to all voluntary personnel, together with information on how to make claims.
- 6.7 Volunteers who have concerns or grievances about the Union's staff or Officers will follow the complaints procedures laid down in the Union's Bye-Laws.

7.0 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 will seek consultation and approval from the relevant Union Staff member.

8.0 Record Keeping

- 8.1 Details of members of the Union will be kept using the Union's record systems. Data pertaining to an individual's student record will be provided by the University.
- 8.2 Information about a member's volunteer role(s), including training information, awards, and other relevant information will be kept securely.
- 8.3 Records are only accessible to staff, officers 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. Please see the Data Protection Policy for full details.

9.0 Expectations

- 9.1 In terms of delivering our services to volunteers it will be useful to outline the expectations of both the individuals undertaking the roles and what they can expect from the Union.
- 9.2 The Union expects volunteers:
- (a) 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.
 - (b) To be an ambassador for the Union and the University, bringing neither into disrepute and maintaining good relations with the external community.
 - (c) To perform their volunteering role to the best of their ability, undertaking the tasks within the role description and to be clear and transparent if they are experiencing problems or difficulties undertaking the role.
 - (d) To follow the Union's policies and procedures, including Equality and Diversity, Health & Safety, and Finance policies.

- (e) 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.
- (f) 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:

- (a) To treat them with respect and courtesy, and act in a manner which is appreciative of the wide diversity within the Union's membership.
- (b) To provide a role description for their volunteering role as well as training, support, and resources to help them undertake the role.
- (c) To provide online and in-person services to support individuals undertaking volunteer roles.
- (d) To promote their activities, achievements and successes in line with the Union's guidance on publicity; and to undertake recognition schemes such as the Student Activities Awards.
- (e) To respond to your emails, messages and requests within a reasonable timeframe.
- (f) To be mindful of academic life and not make requests or apply pressures which will place undue strain upon the volunteer's academic or personal commitments.
- (g) To investigate complaints within an appropriate timeframe and keep complainants informed as to progress.

10.0 Operational Accountabilities

10.1 Every volunteer role description will include outcomes which a volunteer can expect the Union to fulfil during the course of their volunteer service. These outcomes will relate to the Union's strategic goals and will be altered to reflect the Union's current strategic position. At the time of writing, the outcomes, relative to the Union's strategy, will be:

- (a) **Employability.** Any volunteering opportunity offered by the Union will stipulate in what ways volunteers can expect the role to improve their future employability prospects and afford skills and experience valuable to employers.
- (b) **Value in the University experience.** Any volunteering opportunity offered by the Union will stipulate in what ways volunteers can expect the role to add value to their University experience, either by benefit to the volunteer themselves in engaging with the University community, or by the contributions they make and the value they themselves add to that community.
- (c) **Driving Improvements.** Any volunteering opportunity offered by the Union will stipulate in what ways volunteers can expect the role to afford them the opportunity to drive improvements at the Union and University, by providing essential and valuable services to students, contributing to the Union's or University's operational effectiveness, or

by other means making and influencing meaningful change at the institution.

- (d) Health, Happiness, and Community. Any volunteering opportunity offered by the Union will stipulate in what ways volunteers can expect the role to improve their student satisfaction, as well as the ways in which their work will contribute to student transition, retention, and attainment, by way of improving other students' satisfaction, health, and happiness at the institution.

- 10.2 The line manager responsible for the role will be responsible for ensuring the advertised role description is adequate in identifying these outcomes.
- 10.3 The volunteer will be afforded the opportunity to contact and discuss their duties with the line manager responsible for their role in order to ensure their work is achieving the outcomes promised in the role description.
- 10.4 Line managers will support volunteers in achieving their promised outcomes and offering them appropriate duties in their roles to ensure their fulfilment.
- 10.5 All volunteers will be offered the opportunity to complete a feedback form at the completion of their roles which will refer to the outcomes promised in the role description. Volunteers may indicate whether they feel the promised outcomes were achieved or not and suggest ways in which their roles were successful or could be improved in further iterations. This feedback may be used by the Union to ensure its work continues to promote its own strategic goals as well as improve the experience of student volunteers throughout the organisation.