Student Volunteering Policy

Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Policy sets out the rights and responsibilities of student volunteers, Victoria University's responsibility to student volunteers, and defines student "volunteering" as distinct from paid work.

Section 2 - Scope

(2) This Policy applies to:

a. All students, who undertake volunteer work for the University, via a VU-affiliated student club, or as part of a volunteer program facilitated by Victoria University (VU).

(3) This Policy does not apply to:

a. Placements that students undertake as part of Work Integrated Learning and for course credit (i.e. vocational placements);
b. Students as staff who are undertaking work as part of their paid employment arrangements; or
c. Staff undertaking volunteer work at VU.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(4) VU encourages students to undertake volunteering via a number of mechanisms including leadership and volunteering programs such as the 'Vollies', involvement in clubs and societies, and community volunteering opportunities (e.g. altruistic activities undertaken for not for profit organisations) advertised via Student Hub.

(5) Activities undertaken by VU volunteers are to be:

a. of benefit to the community and the volunteer;
b. of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion;
c. for no direct financial payment;
d. for designated volunteer positions only; and,
e. Compliant with relevant legislation including the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth).

(6) This does not preclude the provision to volunteers of meals, travel and expense reimbursement and other agreed out of pocket expenses in a manner in accordance with the University's Conflict of Interest - Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Procedure.

(7) Volunteer work will not be used as a substitute for paid employment.

(8) Volunteers are not employees of the University and are therefore not subject to the relevant industrial instruments or other employment entitlements.

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(9) All volunteer programs will have a designated Supervisor for volunteers to report to and seek guidance from.

(10) All volunteer positions will be given a clear statement of the duties of the role.

(11) Volunteer recruitment and selection will occur in accordance with the University's equal opportunity and anti-discrimination principles, and relevant State and Federal equal opportunity legislation.

(12) The University may undertake pre-placement checks of potential volunteers, to determine suitability for specific roles. In particular, this includes:

a. The volunteer must apply for a Working with Children Check (WWCC) where volunteer work includes anticipated direct contact with people under 18 years of age.
    i. Please note that occasional direct contact with a person under 18 years that is incidental to the volunteer work is not considered child-related work for the purposes of the Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic) and does not require a WWCC.
b. A Police Check where the Supervisor determines it is required for the particular role.

(13) It is the responsibility of operational areas sponsoring non-academic activities to inform students of any requirements for satisfactory police and/or working with children check for participating in such activities.

(14) Volunteers will be provided with access to this and all other relevant policies and procedures, including University OHS requirements.

(15) Volunteers are required to sign a Volunteer Agreement to clarify expectations and formalise the volunteer arrangement.

(16) It is recommended the Supervisor create a Position Description for volunteers undertaking each volunteering opportunity as best-practice volunteer management.

(17) Volunteers are required to observe appropriate standards of behaviour towards and in the company of children and young people under 18 years of age, including online conduct.

(18) All Volunteers must adhere to the University requirements regarding Appendix 1 - Child Safety Reporting Process.

(19) Students undertaking university sponsored non-academic activities that may involve contact with the persons who are elderly, have a disability or are under 18 years of age may be required to provide a satisfactory police check and/or working with children check.

(20) It is the responsibility of the individual student participating in university-sponsored non-academic activities to provide the required satisfactory police and/or working with children check record to the relevant operational area.

(21) Volunteers will undertake their tasks in accordance with the reasonable instructions of the Supervisor, and in accordance with all relevant University policies and procedures.

(22) Volunteers are expected to adhere to the values set out by the Student Charter.

(23) Volunteers will be provided with adequate information, induction, training, support, supervision and resources to undertake their designated tasks by the Supervisor.

(24) Volunteers will be reimbursed for agreed out of pocket expenses. Expenses, including, if relevant, a ceiling amount, must be agreed in advance with the Supervisor.

(25) Volunteer work must take place within a framework that complies with the University's Health and Safety Policy and Risk Management Policy.

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(26) The Supervisor will ensure that:

a. All volunteer work takes place in a safe environment;
b. All relevant risk assessments have taken place; and
c. All risk management procedures are adhered to.

(27) If injury/illness occurs as a result of a volunteer activity organised by Victoria University, the Supervisor must complete an incident report online via QuickSafe.

(28) If injury/illness occurs as a result of a volunteer activity organised by Victoria University's external partnered organisation, the Supervisor must assist the Volunteer Coordinator to complete an incident report online via QuickSafe.

(29) Where a volunteer has access to confidential material as part of their work, they will be asked to abide by the Privacy Policy and sign a Confidentiality Agreement as part of their Volunteer Agreement.

(30) Any grievances either raised by a Volunteer, or against a Volunteer, which cannot be dealt with by the Supervisor, must be escalated to the Volunteer Coordinator and will be dealt with according to the Complaints Policy and Complaints Procedure (Student and Public), or, if relevant, the Student Misconduct Regulations 2019 and Student Misconduct Procedure.

(31) VU may terminate a Volunteer opportunity or engagement of an individual volunteer, at its discretion and/or if a volunteer fails to comply with this Policy or other related policies or legislation.

(32) The Volunteer Coordinator will ensure that Volunteer contributions are recorded and recognised. Recognition and rewards are not a substitute for wages but are intended to express thanks and respect for the work of Volunteers.

(33) Student Life will provide all volunteers with a written statement of their participation in Student Life activities as a volunteer on request.

(34) Student Volunteers are covered by the University's Public Liability and Personal Accident insurance policies for volunteering activities organised by, approved by or under the direction of VU.

(35) Intentional, wilful or illegal acts on the part of a Volunteer that cause damage are excluded from Public Liability insurance cover.

(36) Other exclusions may apply to insurance coverage. The Volunteer Coordinator will obtain advice from the University's Insurance Manager as appropriate regarding coverage of particular activities.

(37) Where students undertake volunteer work for an external organisation under the auspices of a VU program, or advertised via VU tools such as the Vollies program or Student Hub, the relevant VU staff members will take reasonable steps to determine that:

a. The organisation fulfils the above conditions in relation to volunteer recruitment, management, health and safety before involving VU students; and
b. The opportunity is a genuine volunteer arrangement and not simply unpaid work.

(38) External volunteering bodies may advertise volunteering opportunities to VU students only with prior approval from VU staff. VU reserves the right to refuse to advertise opportunities that do not fulfil the above conditions.

(39) Where volunteer placements involve financially onerous obligations, such as prohibitive transport costs, etc, students are advised to make their own enquiries in order to decide if this type of placement is suitable for them.

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(40) The Volunteer Coordinator and/or VU Careers Hub can advise staff and students on the suitability of opportunities.

Section 4 - HESF/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(41) HESF: 7.2 Information for Prospective and Current Students

(42) National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (Outcome Standards for Registered Training Organisations) Instrument 2025 : Standard 2.5 Diversity and Inclusion; 2.6 Wellbeing.

Section 5 - Definitions

(43) Volunteer Coordinator: Senior Member of Student Life responsible for coordinating volunteer activities.

(44) Volunteering: Volunteering is defined as “time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain,” as per Volunteering Australia. Further information regarding the definition can be found on the Volunteering Australia website.

(45) Supervisor: A VU staff member or an external partner staff member charged with overseeing the activities of Volunteers.

(46) Direct contact: Direct contact means any contact between a person who is 18 years and over and a person who is under 18 years that involves — (a)physical contact; or (b)face to face contact; or (c)contact by post or other written communication; or (d)contact by telephone or other oral communication; or (e)contact by email or other electronic communication.

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