STAFF VOLUNTEERING POLICY

Title:	**University of Sussex Staff Volunteering Policy (Engage for Change)**
Approved by:	People, Culture, and Inclusion Committee, May 2021
Implementation date:	27 September 2021 (beginning of the 2021/22 academic year)

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1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

1.1.1   The University of Sussex is committed to becoming the most sustainable university in the United Kingdom. In doing so we are committed to supporting our staff and students to have a positive social, environmental and economic impact in our local communities and the wider world.

1.1.2   We also recognise that volunteering can be mutually beneficial for individuals and employer organisations - providing staff with opportunities to make a difference whilst developing new personal and professional skills.

1.1.3   Employer-supported volunteering scheme can improve staff wellbeing and work-life balance, increase engagement and cohesion amongst teams and between different departments, and foster partnerships and cooperation within the local community.

1.1.4   The Engage for Change Volunteering Scheme and policy is aligned with the University's five key values – kindness, integrity, inclusion, collaboration and courage – set out in the University's 2025 Strategic Framework titled 'A Better University for a Better World'.

1.1.5   The policy also supports the implementation of the University's Sustainability Strategy and the realisation of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

1.2   Purpose

1.2.1   This document sets out the University' procedures and conditions for enabling and supporting staff who participate in University approved volunteering activities that align with the University's values and support the achievement of the Sussex 2025 vision and Sustainability Strategy.

1.3   Scope

1.3.1   This policy and procedure will apply to all University of Sussex staff with contracts lasting 12 months or more.

1.3.2   This policy applies to external volunteering opportunities only, opportunities to volunteer internally will be governed by separate policies.

1.3.3   This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis and can be amended at any time.

1.4   Definitions

Word/Term	Definition
Employee Volunteering	Community-based voluntary activity undertaken by a member of staff, with the support and encouragement of their organisation, to develop their skills and competencies whilst making a valued contribution to a not-for-profit organisation. Volunteering is defined as carrying out tasks or providing services for individuals or community organisations without financial payment or compensation from the individual or organisation.
United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 17 SDGs are integrated – that is, they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental

	sustainability. See annex 7.1 for an overview of the SDGs.

1.5 Equality and Diversity

1.5.1 This volunteering scheme and policy will undergo an Equality Analysis to comply with the University's legislative responsibilities so as not to unlawfully discriminate against any protected characteristic.

1.5.2 Statistical analysis on usage of the scheme will also be used to inform the University's Equality policies, guidelines and procedures. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Unit will monitor these statistics on an ongoing basis to identify any key areas of concern and will work with the local line management to mitigate any adverse impacts of the policy/procedure on potentially vulnerable groups in order to ensure equal access to opportunities, engagement and participation amongst all University employees.

2 POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 The University of Sussex is committed to acting as a civic leader and partner by allowing representatives of the university to contribute to and take an active role in the local and regional community through volunteering activities that align with the University's community engagement and sustainability agenda, which can be shown to contribute to one of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

2.2 The University actively promotes and encourages volunteering and recognises the positive and meaningful impact of staff participating in voluntary activities. That is why it will reasonably support applications for approved employee volunteering projects, via this procedure, with paid leave or flexible working approaches where possible.

3 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

3.1 A designated 'Engage for Change - Go Volunteer' website provides the focus for information, advice and support for staff who wish to volunteer in the local community. This may include opportunities to engage with on-campus volunteering, which will be co-ordinated by the University Sustainability Team with support from volunteering champions in each professional service directorate and academic school.

3.2 University supported volunteering activities are those that are either

a) University approved volunteering opportunities or undertaken at a partner non-profit organisation or group which are listed on the University's 'Engage for Change - Go Volunteer' website; or
b) Those that have been selected, organised and applied for by an employee of one's own accord and approved by the university's sustainability team as being in line with this policy.

3.3 The University will grant reasonable time off for participation in approved voluntary activity. This staff volunteering scheme will provide all part-time and full-time employees with contracts of 12 months or more with the opportunity to undertake a minimum of 2 days of voluntary sustainability-

related activities in the regional community per annum (pro rata). The maximum number of volunteering days per annum will be aligned with the annual leave year, i.e. the maximum number of days is reset at the same time as the annual leave year (October each year). The exact number of days will be reviewed on an annual basis depending on uptake, feasibility, impact and cost.

3.4   Volunteering may be for a one-off event or project over a day/number of days or may be a slightly more regular commitment supporting one specific project. The support mechanism for each project will be considered on an individual basis and defined by the employing manager. It may take the form of:

a) Paid time off - e.g. 2 individual days of volunteering in one-day duration projects, 2 consecutive days undertaking a volunteering activity, one hour per week projects over the course 15 weeks;
b) Flexible working - e.g. a later than usual start with a later finish for participation in a volunteering opportunity.

3.5   Support and guidance will be provided for staff and managers on how best to implement and manage flexible working arrangements and relationships to accommodate voluntary activities. Guidance will be provided for managers on how to consider requests for volunteering fairly.

3.6   Volunteering applications must be authorised by the prospective volunteer's line manager for any volunteering activity.

3.7   Any request to undertake voluntary work will be considered on an individual basis and will be made in line with business needs. Participation in a volunteering activity will only be approved if it is not detrimental to the operational requirements of the team, department or the University as a whole, managers must consider the impacts on the team, department or University before any decision is made. Managers may agree with the prospective volunteer to a deferment of the volunteering activity should business commitments require.

3.8   If a manager is unable to support a request for volunteering, a reason must be given to the member of staff. Where an application for a particular project cannot be accommodated, the University will refer the respective employee to the volunteering opportunities and partner organisations listed on its webpage and offer any available suitable alternative projects which the employee can progress or decline as they so wish.

3.9   If a manager refuses the application for volunteering and provides a reasonable explanation for not agreeing and supporting the employee's request, the manager's decision is final and not open to appeal by the employee.

3.10   The University reserves the right to cancel or suspend volunteering activity at any time, without notice.

3.11   Sickness absence from the volunteering activity should be notified to the University in the normal manner, as articulated in the Guidance on Leave and Absence from Work.

3.12   All volunteering activity will be monitored for evaluation purposes by the Sustainability team, including level of uptake, benefits and disadvantages as viewed by the volunteer, the line manager and the external organisation. In terms of economic, social and environmental sustainability the impact of the volunteering scheme will also be measured and recorded against the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

3.13   The University's employment policies continue to apply during the

volunteering activity.

3.14 Any expenses, including transport or commuting costs, incurred in the volunteering activity must be met by the individual volunteering or the host organisation and are non-refundable. The University will not be liable for any expenses.

3.15 Arrangements for any relevant DBS (Disclosure and Baring Service) Checks, Health and Safety arrangements, Risk Assessments and Insurance will be arranged by the charity or organisation providing the volunteering opportunity and will not be the responsibility of the University.

3.16 Time off for public duties such as magistrates, volunteer reserve service, justice of the peace, armed forces, local authority councillor etc. is not covered within this policy but instead in separate policies. Reference should be made to the University's Special Leave Policy regarding these activities.

3.17 Time off for undertaking voluntary work for political parties, e.g. canvassing, is not permitted as part of the Volunteering Scheme.

3.18 All employees must comply with the University's rules, policies and procedures at all times. Unauthorised absences from work for volunteering purposes, failure to declare any changes to the volunteering requirements or overall abuse of the volunteering scheme policy are matters for disciplinary proceedings and may lead up to and include dismissal.

4 RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Members of staff are responsible for:

- Participating in the appropriate volunteering application process that meet the requirements of this policy and the information provided on the Engage for Change – Go Volunteer web pages.
- Completing a volunteering request form and gaining the necessary approval of their line manager, where volunteering is not detrimental to the operational requirements of the department or the University
- Undertaking any training, completing any DBS checks and risk assessment documents, and making any health and safety arrangements necessary for the relevant volunteering role;
- Participating in agreed programmes of volunteering to the best of their abilities;
- Keeping their line manager informed of progress throughout the programme of volunteering;
- Informing their line manager and volunteering team immediately if they intend to withdraw from an agreed programme of volunteering;
- Informing the voluntary organisation directly if they are unable to attend.
- Reporting the success or otherwise of initiatives to the Sustainability Team for possible use within public case studies and university promotional materials.

4.2 Managers are responsible for:

- Considering the impact on service provision before agreeing to such requests
- Formally approving the volunteering application form submitted by the employee

- Agreeing the number hours and working pattern to support the volunteering activity;
- Monitoring the time spent away from work in voluntary activity for each volunteer;
- Ensuring that the proposed volunteering activity remains within the scope of this policy and aligns with the university's core values;
- Reviewing with the member of staff their progress throughout their period of volunteering and recording outcomes
- Supporting the University's commitment to volunteering and community engagement through genuine consideration of requests made to volunteer, which account for business requirements.

4.3 Human Resources are responsible for:

- Working with the sustainability team to ensure records on the number of volunteering placements by the 17 categories of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- Advising mangers on time allowances and the application of this policy and procedure.

5 PROCEDURE

5.1 An employee interested in taking part in the University's Volunteering Scheme must reach out to organisations, projects or initiatives offering volunteering opportunities and organise all voluntary activities on their own accord by drawing on and complying with university guidance and policy. Subsequently, an employee must inform the respective line manager about their intention to undertake a voluntary activity through the University's Volunteering Scheme by providing details about the host organisation, duration, commitments, responsibilities, etc.

5.2 Where an appropriate volunteering opportunity for a member of staff is identified, the member of staff and their line manager must complete and sign an employee volunteering form provided by the sustainability team.

5.3 There is likely to be a minimum commitment required for each volunteering opportunity, therefore the member of staff and their line manager should review the agreement after this time and give consideration as to whether the volunteering can continue further, if required.

6 DOCUMENT GOVERNANCE

6.1 Responsibility

Policy Owner	Matthew Naish (Reward Manager) and Samantha Waugh (Sustainability Manager)

6.2 Version Control and Change History

Version Number	Approval Date	Approved by	Amendment
1.0	… May 2021	People Culture and Inclusion Committee	New Policy
2.0	… 2021	University Executive Group	Minor revisions and update to policy

6.3 Document Review

6.3.1 The policy and procedure will be reviewed by the Director of Human Resources (or their delegate) in association with the university's Sustainability Team, trade unions, employee representatives (where appropriate) and managers in response to statutory changes, changes in University procedures or structures or as a result of the monitoring of the application of the policy and procedure. In any event, the policy and procedure will be reviewed every two years.

7 ANNEX

7 Overview of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
See https://sdgs.un.org/goals for further information.

SDG	Icon	Definition
GOAL 1: No poverty		End poverty in all its forms everywhere
GOAL 2: Zero Hunger		End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
GOAL 3: Good Health and Well-being		Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
GOAL 4: Quality Education		Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
GOAL 5: Gender Equality		Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
GOAL 6: Clean Water and Sanitation		Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

GOAL 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	**7** AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
GOAL 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	**8** DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
GOAL 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	**9** INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
GOAL 10: Reduced Inequalities	**10** REDUCED INEQUALITIES	Reduce inequality within and among countries
GOAL 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	**11** SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
GOAL 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	**12** RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
GOAL 13: Climate Action	**13** CLIMATE ACTION	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
GOAL 14: Life Below Water	**14** LIFE BELOW WATER	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
GOAL 15: Life on Land	**15** LIFE ON LAND	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
GOAL 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	**16** PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
GOAL 17: Partnerships for the Goals	**17** PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development