

Oxford University Gardens, Libraries & Museums (GLAM) Volunteer Policy

1. Introduction

This policy has been written in accordance with the [University of Oxford Volunteer Policy](#). It refers specifically to volunteering managed by the [GLAM Volunteer Service](#) (part of the GLAM Divisional Office) across the following GLAM Sites:

Ashmolean Museum

Oxford Botanic Garden & Harcourt Arboretum

History of Science Museum

Museum of Natural History

Pitt Rivers Museum

Weston Library (Public Engagement Team; Bodleian HR Services deal with volunteering elsewhere in the Bodleian)

As part of the University, the GLAM organisations have an ongoing commitment to preserving their collections for future generations and to engaging visitors with them. GLAM volunteering programmes contribute to both aims whilst also widening access, increasing depth of participation, and promoting diversity, equality, and social outcomes such as wellbeing.

The University acknowledges the positive impact made by volunteers and recognises the importance of volunteers feeling that they are supported and appreciated, that their time is well spent, and that they work in a distinctive but complementary role alongside paid staff in a mutually beneficial way.

Accordingly, GLAM values volunteers as an extending part of its workforce and community engagement remit, and as advocates for its organisations.

2. Definition

The [National Council for Voluntary Organisations](#) (NCVO) defines volunteers in this way:

Volunteers give time, carrying out activities that aim to benefit community or society.

Volunteers are unpaid and choose how they wish to give their time. Helping close friends or relatives does not count as volunteering.

The University uses volunteers to add value to its core activities and promote public engagement and not as a replacement for paid staff.

3. Volunteer Status

Volunteers are not employees, casual workers, interns, or consultants. Nor are they 'workers' entitled to receive statutory benefits. They do not have a contract of employment, contract for services, or letter of engagement, and are not paid a salary or fee. They may receive money for actual receipted expenses incurred during the undertaking of their role and they may receive training to improve their ability to carry out their role, but they receive no other benefits. NB GLAM is committed to improving the effectiveness of volunteers, and they may choose to attend additional in-house training relevant to their volunteering.

Trainees and participants in work experience schemes are not volunteers.

Volunteer arrangements are by their nature flexible; the time the volunteer offer is flexible and subject to change, just as the business of GLAM organisations will also change over time. Volunteers can refuse tasks and choose when to volunteer. Similarly, a volunteer role may need to change in order to remain helpful to the organisation. The University does not intend to create legally binding relations with its volunteers, who should be treated in accordance with the terms of this policy, the Volunteer Guidelines, and their role description.

Volunteers should be managed differently to employees and failure to treat volunteers in accordance with their volunteer status may create tax and legal complications. To support with this, GLAM organisations, as above, ask all volunteers to register with the GLAM

Volunteer Service's volunteer management system. If there are questions on this issue, staff should take advice from the GLAM Volunteer Service. The Volunteer Service will seek advice from the HR Business Partner if the issue is not clear.

4. Equality and Diversity

The University is committed to ensuring equality of access to volunteering opportunities and equality of treatment for its volunteers in all of its relevant policies and practices. No volunteer will be treated less favourably than another because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, or sexual orientation.

The University seeks to recruit volunteers from all areas of the community in order to develop a diverse volunteer-base. It is committed to developing an environment in which different ideas, abilities, and cultures are valued and where people of various backgrounds can participate, including through supported volunteering projects, working with community partners.

Because of health and safety and insurance considerations the University does not recruit volunteers below the age of 16 years.

5. Supervision and the Supervisor's Role

Volunteers within GLAM should be supported to carry out their role successfully and thus require good supervision. Volunteers should always know who to go to for support on the day.

The role of staff supervising volunteer roles includes creating and shaping the opportunity (potentially in collaboration with volunteers and other colleagues); assessing risks for the role and individuals within their context; selecting, inducting, training, coordinating, and supporting volunteers; and logging volunteers' hours. Supervisors of volunteer roles can seek advice from the GLAM Volunteer Service on all of these aspects. All volunteer

recruitment should go through the GLAM Volunteer Service so that a fair process is followed.

Occasionally, it may be pertinent for supervisors to make specific risk assessments that support safeguarding with regard to an individual volunteer e.g. someone with additional support needs or a 'young' volunteer (aged 16 or 17).

Supervisors should review any role(s) and volunteer(s) they are responsible for at the end of a settling-in period and then at least once a year (if relevant) to ensure that both parties are satisfied with the arrangement, and make any adjustments. This may include additional training to ensure volunteers have the competence and confidence to continue successfully in their role.

Event organisers and duty managers may act as supervisors for volunteers at events and activities at GLAM organisations. Their role is to provide on-the-day direction and support to volunteers. They may also communicate with volunteers to coordinate logistics and log their hours.

The supervisor will also deal with complaints about the volunteers or their work, or complaints made by volunteers, in accordance with the University's [Problem Solving Procedure](#). Both supervisors and volunteers may also take complaints to the GLAM Volunteer Service. Unfortunately, some circumstances may arise where it will not be possible to continue with the volunteering arrangement. In this case the supervisor will end the volunteering.

6. Recruitment

Many people contact the GLAM organisations seeking volunteering opportunities every year. To help ensure a fair and inclusive recruitment process, all recruitment is done via engagement with the GLAM Volunteer Service.

Before starting recruitment, supervisors agree a role description with the GLAM Volunteer

Service. The role description will ensure that volunteer roles are clearly differentiated from the roles that paid staff undertake. It will also give potential volunteers clear expectations of the role before deciding whether it is something they want to express an interest in. The role description should explain informally the knowledge and skills needed for the role, its main tasks, and the experience it will offer the volunteer.

Sometimes members of current or former paid staff wish to volunteer for their department or another one within the University. Care must be taken to avoid problems arising from any confusion of the two roles, or in managing any consequences of misconduct. The volunteer role should be substantially different to the paid role and departments should consult the GLAM Volunteer Service, who may consult their HR Business Partner, before taking an employee as a volunteer. The [NCVO website](#) has useful guidance on this issue.

Most volunteers are recruited via the GLAM Volunteer Service website and mailing list. Prospective volunteers can sign up to the mailing list via the GLAM Volunteer Service registration page. They may also be recruited through advertisements on social media, other websites, newsletters, and through volunteer fairs, word-of-mouth, and informal conversations with staff. Some volunteer projects also work with targeted community partners.

Anyone wishing to apply for a volunteer role should be asked to follow an agreed selection process. This usually includes submitting an expression of interest and/or attending an informal, individual or group interview.

Checks to be carried out following selection will depend upon the role and the supervisor's risk assessment for the role. All new volunteers must complete their registration form to provide and confirm additional information prior to starting. Unless otherwise agreed with the GLAM Volunteer Service, all new onsite volunteers must also:

- provide contact details of two referees, who must be aged 18+, have known them for at least a year, and not be in the volunteer's family or in a relationship with them;

- provide proof of identity (there is no need to undertake a formal right to work check for volunteers).

All non-UK/EEA volunteers must have a visa that permits them to volunteer.

References should be taken up and documents should be checked **before** the volunteer starts volunteering.

7. Further Additional checks

Safeguarding risks must be considered as appropriate when making the risk assessment for a volunteer role. If a volunteer will be working with children (under 18s) and/or adults 'at risk', the supervisor and the volunteer must make sure that they fully comply with the University's [Safeguarding Code of Practice](#).

Some potential volunteers may have been barred from working with children or adults at risk. It would be a criminal offence for the University to allow a barred individual to work with such a group in a regulated activity. Individuals are asked to declare if they have any relevant unspent convictions when they complete their registration form.

8. Expectations

When completing their registration, new volunteers are asked to confirm that they have read and understood the GLAM Volunteer Service Volunteer Guidelines. The Guidelines, together with this policy, the role description, and the Volunteer Handbook ensure that expectations on both sides are clearly set out at the earliest possible opportunity.

Supervisors will draw upon these documents and use an Induction Checklist to ensure that all pertinent points are covered before starting the role.

This includes setting out:

- the University and GLAM Division structure
- the organisational and strategic context of the role
- supervision of the role
- arrangements for induction and training
- access to facilities, equipment, and resources necessary to complete the tasks

- Key safety information, including risks identified in the risk assessment (the University is jointly responsible with volunteers for their health and safety)
- cover by the University's insurance
- respectful treatment in line with the University's equal opportunities policy
- how and when the volunteering will be reviewed (this should happen after an initial settling-in period and at least once a year thereafter, if relevant)
- the payment of reimbursable expenses, if relevant
- the requirement for a Deed of Copyright Assignment, if relevant
- action in case of a problem or complaint
- the organisation's need for assurance that:
 - the volunteer will usually attend at the times agreed or inform the organisation if this is not possible
 - the volunteer will abide by the University's objectives and its equal opportunities, health and safety, confidentiality, conflict of interest, intellectual property, information security, and other relevant policies
- that no contract of employment is intended, and the expectations are binding in honour only

Volunteers should be treated in a manner consistent with both the role description and the volunteer guidelines. The volunteering relationship can be dissolved on either side at any time.

9. University Cards

The vast majority of GLAM volunteers do not need or have University cards for their volunteering, although it is important that they wear a badge or lanyard that identifies them as a volunteer. There are a few volunteer roles that require the volunteer to have a University card. In this case, the supervisor should work with GLAM HR to apply to the University Card Office to issue these volunteers with 'Cardholder' University cards. This will determine their access to limited IT resources via Oxford Single Sign On; provide identification; and allow access to designated spaces. Cardholder cards do not give entitlement to a mailbox on the nexus system, but they entitle volunteers to have mail

delivered to their home email address. The supervisor should advise the registration team at IT Services of the volunteer's home email address so that they can set up the routing.

Cardholder cards do not entitle volunteers to discounts at University retail outlets, subsidised access to University sports facilities, or use of the University Club. As with other volunteer badges and lanyards, in the interest of security, it is recommended that the University card should remain within the department's premises at all times.

10. Expenses

Volunteers should not be out of pocket because of volunteering, but they must only receive reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses that have been incurred as part of the volunteer role, and these must be evidenced by receipts. Volunteers should never receive payments of any nature, as these are, in reality, payment for work. GLAM can reimburse travel expenses up to an agreed capped amount. Some projects have external funding, which enables them to exceed this cap. If volunteers are helping for more than 4 hours, their supervisor may choose to provide a light meal.

NB If volunteers were to receive more than out-of-pocket expenses, the University would need to review their status as volunteers and complete annual notifications of reimbursement payments for expenses and any other benefits to HM Revenue and Customs. Any payments or benefits other than genuine expenses would be subject to tax and national insurance. These volunteers would also be liable for tax on any expenses given to cover travel to and from home. For advice on tax matters relating to volunteers please contact the [Payroll team](#).

11. Insurance

Public liability insurance provides the University (GLAM) and its volunteers with a degree of financial protection in respect of claims made against them by third parties for compensation following negligent acts by volunteers arising during their volunteering.

To minimise the risk of claims arising and to protect individuals concerned, GLAM supervisors should provide direction, support, and training to volunteers appropriate to and commensurate with the role. Where necessary, references and DBS checks should also be

taken up prior to volunteering starting.

It is the University's responsibility to ensure the competency of all volunteers. Supervisors need to undertake performance reviews and risk assessments, paying particular care to match the role with the individual's ability to perform the tasks. They should ensure that volunteers' skills and competencies are refreshed and further developed as appropriate. In accordance with the University's insurance cover, volunteers must be aged 16 or over. Roles for under 18 volunteers should be risk assessed with reference to the University's Safeguarding Code of Practice, to determine what safeguarding measures need to be in place. If the activity is deemed to be 'regulated' a DBS check for the supervisor of the under-18 volunteer is required.

Volunteers must be under the complete direction and control of the University (GLAM) at all times. Levels of supervision will depend on the competency of the volunteer and the activity involved.

12. Data Protection

The University has the same data protection obligation to volunteers that it has to employees, and information about volunteers will be stored in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and associated legislation and the University's [data protection policy](#). Information about individuals is held in accordance with the GLAM Volunteer Service [Privacy Policy](#) and [Data Retention Schedule](#). Over the course of a year, hundreds of people join and leave volunteering in GLAM. Thus, every year, everyone registered on the GLAM Volunteer Service mailing list is asked whether they wish to continue to be registered for a further year.

13. Providing References for volunteers

The GLAM Volunteer Service uses a volunteer management system to keep records of volunteers' contributions. The supervisor may write references for volunteers, detailing the department, the role, and number of voluntary hours undertaken. In the case where volunteers have helped across numerous roles or their supervisor has left the University, the

GLAM Volunteer Service can collate some information and provide a reference. More [detailed advice on giving references](#) is available to University staff.

14. Further Guidance

Detailed guidance on how volunteers are managed within GLAM is given in 'Guidance for GLAM Staff Taking on a Volunteer'.