



KeeleSU Volunteering
A Guide for
International Student
Volunteers

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KeeleSU Volunteering

KeeleSU Volunteering is here to support you in finding volunteering opportunities to suit you. It can be course related or just a particular activity that is meaningful to you.

Volunteering can range from fundraising to teaching, there is so much choice! This guide is designed to give you an understanding of what volunteering is and what you can gain from it.

Volunteering Explained

KeeleSU Volunteering department defines volunteering as any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment, community groups or individuals other than yourself. Volunteering activities involve all of the following:

- There is a benefit for the local community, organisation or charity.
- The volunteer is providing a service for a registered voluntary or charitable organisation (or organisation that raises funds for either).
 - This includes volunteering within societies, e.g. in committee positions.
- There should be no monetary payment, other than any reasonable travel and food expenditure actually incurred.
- There should be no contractual obligations on the volunteer.
- The service is not a substitute for employment (i.e. what you do shouldn't be what a paid worker would normally do).
- It is an optional activity, not compulsory. Volunteering should be something that you choose to do.

Why Volunteer?

Volunteering gives you the chance to meet local people and find out about the country which you are now living and studying in. Here's some more reasons to volunteer with KeeleSU:

- For enjoyment and fun
- To meet new people and make friends
- To build confidence
- To develop your skills (including English Language skills)
- To make a difference to the local community
- To be more immersed in the culture of the country you are now living
- To use skills you already have to benefit other people
- To get off campus and explore the local area
- To make good use of spare time at university (especially in the holidays)
- To be part of a professional environment
- Experience how charitable organisations work in the UK

Types of Volunteering Opportunities

The KeeleSU Volunteering Team have broken down our volunteering opportunities in groups that may be related to your course or may be a completely new area of interest. These include:

- Administration
- Sports
- Retail
- Advocacy
- Charity
- Welfare
- Marketing
- Conservation
- Health
- Animal Welfare
- Arts
- Education
- Fundraising
- Committee positions

Expenses and Travel Costs

Volunteers are usually entitled to get money refunded for any travel expenses they have by the organisation that they are volunteering for. Please contact the organisation directly to clarify their Expenses Policy. If you are unable to claim back your travel expenses, it might be possible to get travel costs reimbursed by KeeleSU. Get in touch with the team for more details.

Legal Requirements and Visas: Are you eligible to volunteer in the UK?

Please note this is just a guide and not a complete account of the Immigration Rules. For up-to-date immigration information please see the Home Office webpage ¹ and UK Council for international Student Affairs². It is also advised you check with the UK Border Agency if you are in any doubt about whether you are allowed to take up voluntary work³.

If you work when you shouldn't work in the UK you are in breach of a condition of your visa and are working illegally, therefore will have your visa cancelled and you could be prosecuted. It is your responsibility to ensure you stay within the parameters of your visa.

Tier 4 Visa

For students on a Tier 4 Visa, there is a legal distinction between 'volunteering' and 'voluntary work'. Volunteering, which is what we aim to provide, is not under contract and for a registered charity.

- You are able to do voluntary work during term time. There is a limit of 20 hours per week which includes both unpaid and paid employment.
- You can do voluntary work/paid work full time during the Keele vacation periods.
- Volunteering should not be done as part of your degree course but at an 'amateur' level.
- Always check if what you want to do counts as voluntary work rather than volunteering, especially if you are on a work prohibition⁴.

UK Border Agency's definition of 'Voluntary Work' and 'Voluntary workers':

- Often have a contract with their employer (this means the employer must provide the work and the voluntary worker must attend at particular times and carry out specific tasks)⁵.
- Voluntary workers are also usually remunerated in kind, for e.g. offered free gifts, accommodation. This can also apply to a promise of paid work in the future⁶.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office>

² <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk>

⁴ <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Working/What-kind-of-work-can-you-do#layer-3794>

⁵ <https://www.wlmht.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Volunteering-England-Accepting-volunteers-from-outside-the-UK.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/volunteering/pay-and-expenses>

UK Border Agency's definition of Volunteers:

- Do not have a contract of employment.
- Must not take the place of an employee.
- Must not receive payment in kind but reimbursement for reasonable travel and subsistence expenses (e.g. lunch) is allowed.⁶
- Usually help a charity or voluntary or public sector organisation.

Students in the following groups are usually **NOT** permitted to voluntary or paid work:

Academic Visitor Visa – does not permit paid or unpaid work in the UK.⁵

General Visitor Visa – does not permit paid or unpaid work in the UK.

If you are an international student it is your responsibility to ensure that you comply with the conditions of your visa at all times, including any restrictions on working in the UK.

If you need any advice or assistance contact Advice & Support at Keele contact ASK

<https://keelesu.com/advice/>

Tel: 01782 734800

Email: su.ask@keele.ac.uk

Interested in Volunteering?

What to do next... Go to <https://keelesu.com/login/?redirect=/volunteering/profile/> to create your profile and get started! Once you have a profile, you can search through the volunteering opportunities we have listed on our database, and look at our partner databases too. If you can't find what you are looking for, get in touch with us and arrange to come in and have a chat with our team.

KeeleSU Volunteering Awards

If you keep your Volunteer Profile up-to-date by logging your hours, adding a review of your work and updating your skills portfolio you will win one of our volunteering awards! These run from Bronze up to Diamond and you can find more information about how to win our awards on our website. The volunteers who meet the criteria to gain a volunteering award are invited to prestigious KeeleSU Awards. These Awards take place once a year at Keele Hall on campus. Student's volunteers will receive their certificates on stage at a fantastic event celebrating all the hard work they have put in over the academic year.

Volunteering Awards and HEAR Recordable

Any Volunteering Awards you receive can be included on your Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR). This is a UK initiative to record both undergraduates' academic qualifications, and their co-curricular achievements. With a HEAR, Keele Graduates will stand out in comparison to other graduates. The HEAR will help you to articulate your skills with a document that evidences their achievements. The HEAR records lot of other co-curricular activities, more details can be found here: www.keele.ac.uk/hear

If you cannot have a HEAR (e.g. medical student) then the award still goes to student records and you still receive a certificate and confirmation of your award from us.

Contact Details: Volunteering Coordinators: Lucy Yates and Hannah Brown.

Email: su.volunteering@keele.ac.uk

Website: www.keelesu.com/volunteering

Phone: 01782733622

Office Opening Hours: Mon to Fri 10am - 4pm, top floor of students union.