

**Library and University Collections Volunteer Handbook**

1. Welcome

Thank you for your interest in supporting the Library and University Collections department. We value your time and energy and consider all volunteers to be a vital part of our team. We are committed to working with each volunteer on an individual basis, and want to build a mutually beneficial relationship with you to enhance your knowledge and skills and our services.

This handbook is designed to introduce you to our work and to provide a basic overview of the policies and procedures which provide all of us – paid and volunteer staff – with guidance and direction. As a volunteer we extend to you many of the same rights as paid staff with regards to the work environment, training, supervision, evaluation, and recognition. In return we ask you to honour your commitments, to respect staff members and volunteers, and to perform your assigned duties to the best of your abilities.

Over time there will be a need to modify the policies, practices and other information described in this Handbook. When such changes occur, you will be notified by an announcement or update. It is your responsibility to keep your handbook current and to be informed about policies and changes that affect you. If you have any questions or need any clarification of the information contained in this Handbook please contact the Student Engagement Officer, or speak directly to your supervisor.

Thank you for your support, we look forward to working with you.

1. Library and University Collections – what we do

The Library and University Collections department manages and supports the main heritage and research collections that are held by the University of Edinburgh and volunteers make a vital contribution towards achieving our aims.

Library and University Collections is part of the Information Services Support Group. We run a range of public services allowing students, academics and the general public access to our collections. We have professional staff working in a variety of areas and we aim to be able to offer voluntary placements throughout our department.

Within Heritage Collections we have the following teams:

* Research Collections Discovery and Projects
* Research Collections
* Lothian Health Services Archive
* Research Services
* Civic Engagement
* Conservation and Collections Management

We also offer support and strategic guidance to many other collections, such as Natural History, Geology, Anatomy and the School of Scottish Studies Archive. In addition to this we lead and participate in a range of research and development projects in partnership with other departments within the University and other external organisations.

1. Principles

The involvement of volunteers with Library and University Collections will be guided by the following principles of good practice. We:

* recognise that voluntary work brings benefits to volunteers themselves, to service users and to paid staff
* will ensure that you are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place for you to fully contribute to our work
* recognise that you require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help you meet your needs as well as providing the training for you to do your work effectively
* will endeavour to involve volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities and ensure our volunteering opportunities are as accessible as possible
* recognise that volunteers require designated tasks and responsibilities within specific roles
* will comply with the Data Protection Act with regards to the use of data held on all volunteers

We are committed to involving you directly within our organisation and our work. To achieve this we aim to:

* allow you the opportunity to contribute to the delivery of all our services
* offer new skills and experiences
* increase our engagement with the local community we serve

1. Volunteer Roles

We are able to offer a broad variety of volunteer roles and placements, each of which requires different skills and experience. The following are just some of the areas where we are able to offer volunteer placements:

* Museum Support
* Outreach and Education
* Gallery Guides
* Archives
* Rare Books
* Exhibition Assistants
* Collection Management
* Customer Services
* Digital Imaging
* Conservation
* Special Collections
* Art Collections
* Technical Services

Each of these areas requires different skills and experience, and we will make every effort to match your interests and knowledge with the requirements of the role.

1. Induction and training

A full induction will be prepared and delivered for you by the relevant member of staff. Your induction will be tailored to include details on the specific tasks being undertaken, but will include the following basic elements:

* the role and key responsibilities of your placement and how this relates to the broader services provided by us
* a timetable for your induction period
* a list of all relevant staff members and details of the organisational structure
* an overview of all the relevant policies including Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity, Computing Regulations, Social Responsibility and Sustainability, Insurance, Data Protection, Conflict Management and Confidentiality
* essential procedures i.e. timekeeping, rota etc.
* details of ongoing training (if relevant)
* other local information as appropriate

You will be provided with a Volunteer Agreement Form that outlines what we undertake to provide for you and what we hope of you in return. The form requires you to abide by the rules and principles of the University and you will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.

You will be supplied with an ID badge and will be asked to wear this whenever carrying out any public facing duties on behalf of Library and University Collections.

As part of your induction, your supervisor will discuss with you any individual training needs and how these will be met. Ongoing training will be offered where it would help you fulfil your role effectively.

Collection items: Some of your work will involve handling items from the collection. You will be given the relevant training for this, and will be expected to follow the organisational procedures relating to preservation and security of the items throughout your placement.

1. Supervision and support

You will have a named staff member as you main contact who will provide ongoing support throughout your placement. Following induction, you will be provided with regular supervision and feedback on your progress, and will be given an opportunity to discuss future developments and air any problems. A grievance procedure exists to deal with any unresolved problems (see section 10).

In addition to your supervisor, you are able to contact the Student Engagement Officer at any time, regarding any issues affecting your volunteer role or experience.

We will be happy to supply a reference to you if you are seeking other voluntary work or paid employment.

1. Guidance

**Attendance**: We understand that from time to time it may not be possible for you to attend at your agreed time, if you are running late, or wish to cancel or postpone, please just let us know with as much notice as possible so we can make alternative arrangements where necessary.

**Holidays and other commitments**: When notified, we will be happy to accommodate your holidays, or other commitments which mean that you cannot attend your normal volunteering schedule. If you require a longer break from your role, please discuss this with your supervisor.

**Policies**: The Equality and Diversity, Health and Safety, Computing Regulations and Social Responsibility and Sustainability Policies will be discussed during your induction, but further details can be found at the websites listed below:

Equality and Diversity: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/equality-diversity>

Health and Safety: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/health-safety/>

Computing Regulations: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/about/policies-and-regulations/computing-regulations>

Social Responsibility and Sustainability: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/about/sustainability>

**Insurance**: All volunteers are covered by the University of Edinburgh’s public liability insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any work on the University of Edinburgh’s behalf.

Details of the insurance cover extended to volunteers when undertaking work for us is available here: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/finance/about/sections/insurance>

**Security**: The University of Edinburgh Security Section provides 24 hour security coverage across the entire University estate every day of the year. For all routine enquiries, please contact: 0131 650 2257. In case of emergency, call 2222 from internal telephones to contact security, or call 999.

1. Confidentiality

During the course of your volunteering activity, you may have access to see or hear information of a confidential nature. You are expected to use your discretion and maintain confidentiality about information relating to all aspects of your volunteering activity.

A breach of confidentiality will result in your volunteering role being terminated. Moreover, the Data Protection Act 1998 also renders an individual liable for prosecution in the event of unauthorised disclosure of information, or action for civil damages under the same Act. You will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement when you start your placement with us.

We will keep the minimum amount of detail on you that we require; this will include your application form, references, placement details, emergency contact, correspondence and any other relevant information. This information will be kept in accordance with the appropriate confidentiality policy. You can request to see the information held on you at any time.

1. Expenses

We do not expect you to be out of pocket because of your voluntary placement with us, and we hope to be able to offer to reimburse all reasonable travel expense claims in the future. You will be made aware of any changes to the guidance regarding expenses claims when appropriate.

1. Problem solving, conduct and disciplinary procedures

The relationship between Library and University Collections and its volunteer workers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract. However, it is important that we are able to maintain our agreed standards of service, and it is also important that volunteers should enjoy making their contribution to this service.

**Problem solving**: It is important that any minor issues are resolved as quickly and effectively as possible. We recommend that you discuss any minor issues informally with your supervisor in the first instance. Occasionally, it may be necessary to investigate some problems in greater detail. If you do not feel that the issue has been resolved to your satisfaction, please report the problem in writing or via e-mail to your supervisor, or to the Student Engagement Officer. We will aim to resolve the problem within five working days, if we are unable to improve the situation we will schedule a meeting with you to discuss the issue further.

**Conduct**: If, for whatever reason, your conduct does not meet with our standards, it will be dealt with as follows:

* You will be invited to an initial informal meeting with your supervisor who will explain the concerns and possible ways of resolving the issue.
* If the problem persists, a formal meeting with your supervisor, the Student Engagement Officer and the head of the relevant department will be arranged to discuss the issue further and to try to negotiate a way in which the situation can be improved.
* If your conduct is still below our required standards, we will end your placement with us.

1. End of placement

We reserve the right to terminate any volunteer role or placement at any time. Where possible, we will try and give you at least two weeks’ notice of termination of the placement but we have the right to terminate the volunteer relationship without notice.

If you wish to resign or withdraw from your voluntary role you are asked to give your supervisor as much notice as possible. We would appreciate at least two weeks’ notice of you leaving your role but we recognise your right to withdraw at any time. You will be offered an exit interview upon leaving your voluntary role with us.

All volunteers are encouraged to participate in an exit interview with their supervisor or to complete a feedback form before leaving a placement, regardless of the reason for leaving. The exit interview and feedback form are your opportunity to communicate your views about your role, the department, management, our services, and any other relevant information you feel it is important for us to know.

We will be happy to provide a letter of reference or a referral for all volunteers on request.

1. Useful information and review dates

Student Engagement Officer: Serena Fredrick

[Serena.fredrick@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Serena.fredrick@ed.ac.uk)

0131 651 1438

We will regularly monitor and review our work with volunteers with reference to this handbook to ensure it is in accordance with the relevant policies and current volunteering best practice.

Date written: 1st September 2022

Date to be reviewed: 1st March 2023

Handbook written by: Serena Fredrick, Student Engagement Officer