

Finding Volunteering Opportunities

Sep 2018

Volunteering Opportunities

Volunteering is giving your time to help someone else or a cause you care about, Volunteering can provide the opportunity to help others, gain experience, improve career prospects and meet new people.

Work in the voluntary/community sector (sometimes referred to as "Third Sector" or "Social Economy") is often an essential prerequisite for entering careers such as social work where you are expected to have detailed knowledge of work activities, proof of particular skills and empathy with clients. Similarly, if you hope to pursue a career in the Media, Arts and Design industry, voluntary work with such groups will be a great asset.

Organisations value the help given by students who demonstrate reliability, commitment, enthusiasm, patience and flexibility.

Benefits of volunteering

- In an increasingly competitive market, it's a good idea to set yourself apart from the pack. Work experience and further study are both useful, but a recent study from Reed Executive found that three quarters of employers prefer to recruit candidates with volunteering experience on their CV.
- It helps you demonstrate self-reliant skills such as taking responsibility for your own career and personal development and people skills such as communication, leadership and team working. It also helps build confidence and can help you discover new hobbies and interests.
- It allows you to practice volunteerism and 'give something back to society', as well as letting you play a part in your community.
- Volunteering can help you build your network and gain useful contacts.
- The Voluntary/community sector is expanding rapidly and organisations in the sector are interested in recruiting more graduates. Having previous experience as a volunteer and gaining knowledge of the organisation and its ethos may give you an advantage at the selection stage.

What jobs could I do?

Voluntary and community sector work tends to fall into the following categories:

- Administrator
- Advice worker/advocate for client groups
- Children/youth work/education/sport
- Conservation & environmental projects
- International aid / Development Worker
- Lobbying/campaigning/fundraising/research
- Social/probation work
- Training and development officer/manager
- Working with the sick/people with a disability

There are opportunities available for short and long-term involvement. More information and vacancies can be found through the Employability Portal at <http://portal.ulster.ac.uk>

Volunteering with local organisations

There are many organisations in your area or near your campus that welcome students and graduates for a semester or an academic year. Check the contacts on this leaflet.

Many organisations offer training for volunteers to help you fulfil your role effectively. There are many interesting opportunities at home or abroad available on the Internet.

Any work experience is valuable and if you've done your research and identified your objectives, the more positive your experience is likely to be. A most successful learning experience can be gained when you are clear as to your contribution to an organisation and what you learn from the experience. This can be enhanced if you register to volunteer through the Students Union. **For more information**

contact:

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UUSU

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Alternatively, contact staff in the Employability & Careers Hub for help: email careers@ulster.ac.uk or telephone 028 95367066

The following sample list could provide specific experience:

- ✦ Tutoring in Schools helps you improve communication and interpersonal skills - <http://addl.ulster.ac.uk/tis/>
- ✦ Young Enterprise allows you to combine making a difference to the community with gaining useful classroom experience - www.yeni.co.uk/
- ✦ Youth and cross community work in N Ireland: www.corrymeela.org
- ✦ Supporting children and adults with a learning disability: www.mencap.org.uk
- ✦ Help and support to those with mental health needs: <http://www.praxisprovides.com/>
- ✦ Provide practical and emotional support for women and children experiencing domestic violence: www.belfastwomensaid.org.uk
- ✦ Working with homeless people in Ireland: www.simoncommunity.org.uk
- ✦ Volunteer and education projects throughout Ireland and Overseas: www.suas.ie
- ✦ Nature conservation charity: www.ulsterwildlifetrust.org
- ✦ Encouraging people to take part in the arts or crafts: www.vaireland.org

*These organisations are just a small list of the available volunteering opportunities out there

Useful Websites

www.volunteernow.co.uk This is an excellent place to start if you want to volunteer. It is quick and easy to use and there are thousands of volunteering opportunities available all over Northern Ireland.

www.nicva.org NICVA is an umbrella body to make contact with voluntary, community and charitable groups in Northern Ireland.

www.communityni.org Community NI is the central resource for information including vacancies in the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.

www.activelink.ie Activelink is the online network for Irish non profit organisations. You can access information on seminars, events and general news relating to the Community and Voluntary sector.

www.volunteering.org.uk National Centre for Volunteering – an essential on-line resource for volunteer managers, potential volunteers and anyone seeking up to date information on volunteering.

www.volunteer.ie National organisation with responsibility for developing volunteering in Ireland, nationally and locally.

Contact the Volunteer Coordinator at the University's Students' Union if you want to volunteer in any aspects of the union such as a course rep, starting a society or helping to run the union on campus. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat.



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