

Volunteer Ireland: Intern Policy and procedural guidelines

Statement of policy

Volunteering is at the heart of Volunteer Ireland. We firmly believe in the ethos and value of volunteering and believe that volunteers make a vital contribution to society as a whole and to the aims and mission of Volunteer Ireland. We regard volunteers as a valuable resource and encourage them to get involved at all levels of the organisation and within all appropriate activities.

Volunteer Ireland recognises that some people wish to volunteer specifically to gain experience in a particular area of our work and with the intention of using that experience towards finding paid work. To this end Volunteer Ireland operates an internship programme. What distinguishes an intern from a volunteer role is that it will always be for a fixed period of time for a certain number of days per week (e.g. 4 days a week for three to six months and to be determined at recruitment stage) during which the interns are supervised and supported to achieve specific learning outcomes through a structured learning programme. The programme includes shadowing and mentoring with an intentional learning agenda incorporated into the volunteer experience and assessed by way of performance review.

As the national volunteer development agency, it is essential that Volunteer Ireland present a model of good practice in volunteer management. We aim to train, support and supervise volunteer intern to the best of our abilities, and to act quickly and fairly if difficulties arise. Volunteer Ireland aims to recruit volunteer interns from a variety of backgrounds, age groups, races, abilities and nationalities. We are committed to equality of opportunity for all interns. Volunteer Ireland aims to have a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship with our volunteer interns. It is Volunteer Ireland's intention that volunteer interns will benefit and prosper from their experience with the organisation.

Definition of Volunteering

“Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society, local communities, and individuals outside the immediate family, the environment or other causes. Voluntary activities are undertaken of a person's own free will, without payment.”

The White Paper Supporting Voluntary Activity (2000)

Procedural guidelines

1. General principles

1.1 Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide all staff and interns with clear guidelines on involving interns; to outline expectations; and to explain management / supervision systems and operating standards. It supplements other Volunteer Ireland policies and procedures. This policy does not constitute a binding contract and is subject to change. Interns and staff are expected to act in accordance with all Volunteer Ireland policies and procedures as outlined by this policy.

1.2 Responsibility

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for ensuring that the policy and the procedures in this document are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff and interns (including voluntary Board members) are expected to facilitate this process.

1.3 Eligibility

Volunteer Ireland will consider involving anyone who wishes to undertake an internship with the organisation. Individuals must, however, be able to demonstrate a commitment to the aims of the organisation and may only be placed if their needs as an intern match the needs of the organisation. No person who has a conflict of interest with any aspect of the organisation will be accepted as an intern.

1.4 Relationship with paid staff

Interns are appointed to enhance the capacity of paid staff (including employment scheme workers), not as a substitute for them. Clear roles are established to differentiate between paid staff and interns to foster mutually beneficial and complementary relationships.

1.5 Working conditions

Interns are treated as full members of Volunteer Ireland team. They are treated as equally and fairly as paid staff and are included in the organisation's functions and decision-making processes wherever practical. Interns are provided with appropriate work sites and have access to the space, equipment and facilities necessary to intern effectively and comfortably.

1.6 Working times

Working times are negotiated between the relevant line-manager and the intern and are as flexible as the tasks allow. Voluntary time commitment is never expected to match that of full-time paid staff, but unscheduled absences can create organisational problems. When expecting to be absent, interns should inform their supervisor as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

1.7 Intern Roles

Volunteer Ireland engages interns across all departments with day-to-day administration, specific project plans, event planning and coordination, communications and social media and training. On occasion Volunteer Ireland is approached by individuals wishing to offer their skills, experience and support in a particular area and in these instances a volunteer role can be designed to facilitate all of this and in line with Volunteer Ireland's work.

Volunteer Ireland currently facilitates volunteer intern programmes across the following areas:

- Communications / Policy
- Events
- Volunteer Programme Management
- Employer supported volunteering
- Administration

1.9 Expectations

A full outline of intern organisational expectations can be found in the Intern Agreement document that accompanies this policy.

2. Recruitment

2.1 Recruitment and Selection

Intern positions are advertised on www.volunteer.ie, I-VOL, various social media platforms and appropriate volunteer recruitment channels. Opportunities may also be advertised on Jobbridge and Activelink websites. All applications are sent to Volunteer Ireland along with a CV, cover letter and or application form, as outlined in the advertised role. Applicants are then shortlisted and asked to attend an informal interview with 1 or 2 members of Volunteer Ireland staff. For certain roles, group interviews may be conducted. Interns are selected based on requirements of the role, experience, skills, availability and interest.

2.2 Appointment and Probation

Successful interns will be notified via telephone and or email. References are required and depending on the role, interns may be required to complete Garda Vetting.

All placements are subject to an initial agreed trial period. The intern's trial or probation period is dependent on the nature and hours of the volunteer role, and is communicated via the intern agreement. Most trial periods are 6 weeks and can be extended.

2.3 Role Descriptions

To ensure that programmes and services are provided efficiently and effectively, Volunteer Ireland will provide each intern with a specific written role description prior to beginning their role. The role description lays out the specific tasks involved in the position, the qualities and skills required to fill the position and any other relevant details of the role.

2.4 Induction

On an intern's first day, they can expect to receive a planned induction with their line manager. This induction involves, but is not limited to, an introduction to all staff/volunteers, general housekeeping, intern policy and agreement overview, terms and nature of the role, Volunteer Ireland operations, Volunteer Ireland services and, as appropriate, further policies and procedures.

In addition to this, all new interns will identify a number of measurable learning objectives at their induction. These can include technical and or behaviour competencies and work activities that can provide the individual with an opportunity to practice and develop within their role.

2.5 Training

Role specific training will be provided to assist interns with their position and its tasks where applicable. All interns are actively encouraged to identify and avail of training opportunities within Volunteer Ireland networks and externally. Approval to undertake external training must be agreed in advance with the designated supervisor/line manager, approved by the CEO and is dependent on resources. If external training

is paid for by Volunteer Ireland, any course or other materials remain the property of Volunteer Ireland. Interns are required to submit a short report outlining the content and usefulness of the course or meeting attended and disseminated to relevant staff/volunteers within VI.

3. Code of Conduct

3.1 Appropriate behaviour

Volunteer Ireland is committed to managing interns in a manner that meets the needs of both the individual and the organisation. Please refer to Harassment and Anti-bullying Policy.

3.2 Confidentiality

Volunteer Ireland respects an intern's right to privacy and confidentiality. In turn, interns are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged information to which they are exposed while interning with Volunteer Ireland.

3.3 Intellectual Property

All written material, whether held on paper, electronically or magnetically which was made or acquired by interns during the course of their involvement with Volunteer Ireland is our property and our copyright and therefore should not be disclosed to any person without our written consent. Interns are expected to exercise caution and care with any documents or other material containing confidential information and at the end of your involvement with the organisation, return any such material in your possession.

3.4 Representation of Volunteer Ireland

Interns must seek prior approval from Volunteer Ireland before undertaking any representation on behalf of the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to, statements to the media, joint initiatives with other organisations and agreements involving contractual or financial obligations.

4. Management of Interns

4.1 Management Interns

Volunteer Ireland is committed to managing interns in a manner that meets the needs of both the organisation and the interns. Each line manager is responsible for the management of their assigned interns, including answering questions regarding policies, delivering induction, arranging training, providing support and supervision and dealing with any complaints or grievances involving interns.

Interns are managed by a staff member/line manager who has the skills and experience in a particular role, and has responsibility for implementing the strategic goals of a particular area. In recognition of the additional support and supervision required by interns this person will be called a 'mentor'.

4.2 Support and Supervision

All interns are allocated a designated supervisor/line manager. It is the role of the designated supervisor to provide advice and guidance relating to the work, provide

support and supervision for the duration of the internship and encourage training opportunities where possible.

Volunteer Ireland commits to supporting all interns to develop personally and professionally within their role. The internship programme provides an opportunity for more careful monitoring and evaluation, under the supervision of an experienced practitioner, i.e. 'mentor'.

4.3 Corrective Action

If appropriate, corrective action may be taken following support and supervision sessions. Example include extending a probation period, additional training and/or reassignment.

4.4 Time and Duty commitments

Volunteer Ireland staff are expected to meet time and duty commitments for interns, to provide appropriate time at induction, training and on a day to day basis. Volunteer Ireland will aim to provide interns with notice regarding upcoming scheduled events or training where their attendance is required.

If an intern is sick or unable to commit to their role for personal reasons they should notify their designated supervisor/line manager by phone as soon as possible. Interns are expected to discuss holiday allowances with their mentor at induction and orientation.

4.5 Ending the intern relationship

Internships have a natural end where the individual will often move on to further opportunities or paid work. In this instance Volunteer Ireland will conduct an exit interview with the intern as a way to capture feedback on their role, experience within the organisation and future learning opportunities.

In the instance of an intern breaching Volunteer Ireland policies, grievance and disciplinary procedures are outlined below.

4.6 Grievance and Disciplinary Difficulties

All interns have access to a process to address any issues or difficulties about any aspect of their work or how they are managed. If an intern is unhappy in their role or have a grievance they wish to discuss they may approach their designated line manager or mentor, or escalate their grievance to the CEO. The matter will be dealt with in a private and confidential manner and in line with Volunteer Ireland's HR standards.

Interns who do not adhere to Volunteer Ireland's policies and procedures or who fail to perform their tasks satisfactorily may be asked to leave. Intern involvement will not be ended until the individual has an opportunity to discuss the reasons for being asked to leave with the supervisor. Grounds for being asked to leave include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Gross misconduct
- Being under the influence of drugs (including alcohol)
- Theft
- Misuse of equipment and materials
- Abuse of clients and co-workers

- Breaches of confidentiality
- Failure to abide by policies and procedures
- Failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard

When an intern is asked to leave this will be communicated both in person and in writing to the individual. If an intern is deemed to have behaved with extreme detriment to Volunteer Ireland and its reputation and to the health and safety of others involved in the organisation, Volunteer Ireland reserves the right to end its relationship with the individual with immediate effect.

5. General Information

5.1 Recognition

Interns provide a unique service to Volunteer Ireland, the benefits of which are difficult to quantify. It is essential that their efforts are recognised and rewarded. Volunteer Ireland staff are responsible for thanking all interns informally on a regular basis for the valuable contribution that they make to the organisation. Examples of formal recognition include cards, certificates, appreciation events, training etc.

5.2 Expenses

Please refer to Expenses Policy for full details of intern expenses. [Please note Volunteer Ireland's expenses policy is subject to change and is regularly reviewed]

5.3 Insurance

Insurance is provided by Volunteer Ireland to cover all interns while working on behalf of and at the direction of Volunteer Ireland. However drivers using their cars in connection with their internship must inform their own insurance company to ensure adequate and continued cover.

5.4 Personal Information and Confidentiality

All information is dealt with in accordance with Data Protection Policy and Data Protection Acts. A folder and database is maintained on all interns, to include their initial application, role description along with any relevant information on scheduling and notes. All personal data held on file will be shredded or safely destroyed within 1 year of an intern's leave date. Interns are able to access their personal information freely upon request. Responsibility for ensuring that the intern receives such information will rest with their line manager.

5.5 References

Where appropriate and upon request interns may be furnished with a reference that states the role, days and hours the volunteer worked.

5.6 Accompanying Documentation

Documents that accompany this policy document are:

- Intern agreement
- Intern induction checklist
- Intern Action and Development plan
- Volunteer Ireland Harassment and anti-bullying Policy
- Volunteer Ireland Expenses Policy

6. Monitoring and evaluation

6.1 Volunteer Involvement

Volunteer Ireland monitors and evaluates intern involvement in the organisation on a regular basis and seeks to make ongoing improvements.

6.2 Feedback

Constructive feedback on this document is always welcome. It must be given to the Chief Executive Officer who will ensure that it is considered fully.

6.3 Review

This document will be reviewed and ratified by the interns, staff and Governance sub-committee on a three yearly basis. Amendments may be added throughout this period.

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